



Ancient Lands of Central Asia Dossier

Immerse Yourself Tour | 26 Days | Physical Level 5

Dubai – Ashgabat – Darvaza – Khiva – Bukhara – Samarkand – Tashkent –
Khujand – Panjikent – Dushanbe – Almaty – Karakol – Chon – Kemin Valley –
Bishkek – Dubai

Take a journey along 2,000-plus-years of central Asian Silk Road history. Discover Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, through stunning scenery in the footsteps of great explorers and conquerors.

- Explore ancient Ashgabat
- Camp by Darvaza Crater
- Discover Holy Bukhara
- Journey to Samarkand
- Gaze at Kazakhstan's Canyon
- Browse bustling markets
- Travel through Tajikistan



Ancient Lands of Central Asia tour inclusions:

- Return international flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals as stated on itinerary
- Visa for Australian Passport Holders
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (If your group is 10 or more passengers)

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, meals not stated in the itinerary, insurance of any kind, customary tipping and early check in or late check out. These are all payable locally.

Immerse Yourself – Go Beyond:

Designed for those who wish to be further immersed in the authentic charm of Asia; our Immerse Yourself Tours include more cultural and active experiences. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts or Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience. Our Immerse Yourself tours include:

- Hiking and extended periods of walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations

Physical Level 5:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘Ancient Lands of Central Asia’ is rated as a **physical level 5** tour. As a whole, this itinerary requires a high level of fitness involving hiking and travelling to remote areas where tourist facilities are less developed. On this tour you will find:

- On some days driving distances are very long and it will take the whole day to reach your destination
- Hiking will generally last around 2-3 hours at a time, sometimes on an incline and mostly on uneven ground
- There will be long periods of walking whilst sightseeing 6 – 8 hour per day
- In Darvaza you will spend 1 night camping with limited facilities.
- In Kyrgyzstan you will be staying in basic accommodation called ‘home stays’ in local people’s homes or guest houses

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of the tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Region Profile: Central Asia

Central Asia is home to fabled cities, market bazaars and striking architecture. It conjures images of mystery and intrigue, and traditions that have remained unchanged for centuries. Travelling through Central Asia offers travellers an historic journey along sections of the Silk Road, a trading route dating back to ancient civilisation. See the spectacular alpine scenery of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which contrasts to the breathtaking ancient cities and classic Islamic architecture of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, further juxtaposed by the modern city of Almaty in Kazakhstan.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 26 days in duration including international flights. Please note due to flight schedules you may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 2 in Ashgabat and end the tour on Day 25 in Bishkek. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Due to a permanent flight cancellation from Urumqi to Ashgabat we are no longer able to fly with China Southern Airlines. This has resulted in the removal of Guangzhou and Urumqi from this itinerary. As an alternative we will now fly via Dubai with Emirates to Ashgabat and from Bishkek via Dubai back to Australia at the conclusion of your tour.

Itinerary – Ancient Lands of Central Asia

Day 1: Australia to Ashgabat via Dubai

Fly today to Dubai. Upon arrival you will make your way to your hotel where a day use room has been booked. This is located in Terminal 3 of Dubai International Airport where you can freshen up and relax before your connecting flight to Ashgabat late this evening. You will board your flight with your tour manager, who will accompany you throughout your whole land itinerary and travel overnight to Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. Flight duration will be approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Please note: It is recommended you bring a change of clothes and selected toiletries (within carry on fluid limits) in your carry on luggage so they are readily accessible for use in your hotel room for day use stay.

Day 2: Arrive in Ashgabat

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Upon arrival early this morning and after collection of your luggage, you will be met in the arrival hall by your local National Escort from Wendy Wu tours. Together with all other group members, transfer approximately 30 minutes to your hotel. Your room will be ready for check in at this early hour. The remainder of the day is at your leisure to rest before dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

Please note if you wish to have lunch today please advise your tour manager who can arrange this for you at the hotel. Some tour group members may wish to skip this in order to rest.

Destination Information

Turkmenistan – Consisting of deserts and oases with a unique historical and cultural significance in the story of the Silk Road. Travellers are seduced by the ruins of ancient cities and the Karakum desert.

Day 3: Ashgabat

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today explore both ancient and modern Ashgabat. Visit the Fortress of Nisa, once a former capital of the Parthian Empire. Stop at the Monument of Independence to admire the gardens, foundations, statues and Ertugrul Gazi Mosque. Learn about Ashgabat's unique history with time spent at the National Museum of History and Ethnography. Sightseeing today will be for approximately four hours and at a leisurely pace.

Destination Information

Ashgabat – Translated in Arabic as 'city of love', Ashgabat was rebuilt after an earthquake in 1948 destroyed most of the city. With independence from Russia in the early 1990's Ashgabat has transformed into a modern city.

Fortress of Nisa - Residence of the former Parthian Empire from the 3rd century. Formed in an irregular pentagon shape these restored ruins comprise labyrinth walls and fortifications.

Monument of Independence - An extravagant monument surrounded by 27 statues of Turkmen heroes located in the 80,000m landscaped park in the centre of the city.

National Museum of History and Ethnography – The largest museum in Turkmenistan, which houses over 327,000 ancient and modern artefacts.

Day 4: Ashgabat

Begin your second day of sightseeing in the city with a visit to the National Carpet Museum to admire the collection of handmade Turkmen carpets. Stop at the colourful Russian Bazaar before travelling outside of Ashgabat to visit a stud farm and learn about the “winged” Akhal Tekkes horses. En route back to Ashgabat stop at the Kipchak complex where the largest mosque in Turkmenistan is located and the family mausoleum of the country's first president.

Destination Information

National Carpet Museum – Houses the largest collection of Turkmen handmade carpets dating back to the 18th century.

Russian Bazaar - Housing an array of foods and souvenir stalls, the bazaar is an ideal way to immerse yourself in everyday Turkmen life.

Akhal Tekkes – The national emblem of Turkmenistan and one of the oldest existing horse breeds in the world. One of the most distinct features is the metallic like sheen of their coats.

Day 5: Ashgabat to Darvaza

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning is free at leisure in Ashgabat. After lunch, drive three hours north to the border between south and north Turkmenistan. At this border we will drive a further eight kilometres through the Karakum desert before arriving at the Darvaza Crater. After unpacking the vehicle, enjoy a walk around this crater, measuring 69 meters wide and 30 meters deep as dusk approaches.

Enjoy a nomadic inspired dinner under the stars, with a spectacular view of the crater and its glowing flames.

Your driver and guide will arrange your accommodation this evening, which are 2-person tents, sleeping bags and mats are provided. Please note there are no bathroom/shower facilities whilst staying overnight and you will need to dig a small latrine for use with a privacy curtain available.

Destination Information

Darvaza Crater - In 1971 the crater was created accidentally due to drilling in the region, which resulted in natural gases being omitted. It was believed that lighting this gas was the safest and quickest option to eradicate the gas and was expected to burn for a few weeks. Over 40 years later it still burns and has been known around the world as the ‘Gates of Hell’.

Day 6: Darvaza to Khiva via Dasoguz

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive four hours to Kunya-Urgench, the former capital of the Khorezm Empire in the 12-13th centuries. Enjoy sightseeing for 2 ½ hours exploring the mausoleums of Turabek Khanum, Il-Arslan, and Sultan Tekesh, the Kutlug Timur minaret and the fabled al Mamun's Academy of Sciences. Continue driving two and a half hours and complete border formalities at Shavat before crossing into Uzbekistan. After a one hour drive you will arrive into Khiva, where you will stay the next three nights.

Destination Information

Turabek Khanum Mausoleum - Whilst there is no knowledge of who is buried inside, this mausoleum is one of the finest examples of Central Asian architecture.

Il-Arslan Mausoleum - The oldest standing monument in Kunya Urgench. Decorated with reliefs from carved terracotta, atop the mausoleum sits a 12-faced conical dome, a unique feature for a building of this kind.

Kutlug Timur Minaret - Originally constructed in the 11th – 12th century and is the tallest minaret in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan - A land-locked country which shares borders with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and a sliver of Afghanistan in the south. Its population of 26 million is mostly made up of Uzbeks (75 per cent), Russians (6 per cent) and Kazakhs (4 per cent). Most of the country is flat, made of steppes, deserts and semi-deserts with limited reserves of fresh water; the only relief is the Amu-Darya River. In the east, Uzbekistan has a stretch of mountains with a friendly climate and rich soils. The Silk Road brought wealth and innovation here and in the 6th century AD, Western Turks brought Islam and a written alphabet, followed by Genghis Khan's invasion. The 14th century brought unity under the ruthless warrior, Timur, and Uzbekistan's prosperity rose again with Samarkand at the heart of its new civilisation.

Day 7: Khiva**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Khiva is made for walking. It is compact, well maintained, lived in and basks in beautiful desert light. Explore this ancient city today with leisurely sightseeing for four to five hours on foot. Visit Kukhna Ark Fortress, the turquoise-tiled Islom-Khodja, the mausoleum of Pakhlavan Makhmud. These are all located within the walled inner town called the Itchan Kala, which was the first site in Uzbekistan to achieve recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1990. Later visit Madrassah Rakhimkhon where studies in religion, astronomy, geography and mathematics took place and the 19th century Tash Hauli Palace decorated in fine china blue tile work.

Destination Information

Khiva - A small city (population approximately 40,000) which some archaeologists believe was founded around the time Christ was born and was said to have been discovered by Shem, the son of Noah. The town certainly existed by the 8th Century, as a minor fort and trading post on a Silk Road branch to the Caspian Sea and the Volga River. In the early 16th Century, Khiva was made capital of the Timurid Empire, becoming a busy slave market and pivot of the khanate for the next three centuries until Russia wrested the region from Timurid grasp in the 19th century.

Itchan Kala - A well-persevered example of Muslim architecture in Central Asia at the beginning of the 19th century, Itchan Kala is the inner town of Khiva. The town is surrounded by brick city walls, with four gates at the cardinal points.

Kukhna Ark Fortress - Construction of the fort began in the 12th century, making it one of the oldest buildings in Khiva. There is written evidence that the 'modern' citadel was built in 1668, and the complex grew to hold an arsenal, warehouse, guardhouse, jail, a large kitchen, stable and official offices. Of the buildings that once stood, you can still view the official reception hall, the ornate mint, mosque and a harem.

Islom-Khodja - One of Kihivas newest Islamic monuments, Islom-Huja was built in 1910 and is the tallest structure in Khiva, visible from anywhere in the city.

Day 8: Khiva

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Drive into the Kyzylkum desert today and visit numerous desert fortresses located on the western side of the Sultan Uiz Dagh Mountains. Dating from as far back as the 2nd century explore Toprak Kala Fortress and Ayaz Kala. Sightseeing at these various fortresses involves a total of two to three hours on foot over rough and eroded ground.

In the evening, enjoy a traditional folklore performance whilst you enjoy dinner.

Destination Information

Toprak Kala Fortress - An excavated ancient town dating from the 2nd century and a former residence of the Khoresm Khan comprising the ruins of a castle, towers and dwellings.

Ayaz Kala - A complex of three ruins found on the edge of the Kizilkum Desert. The high mud brick walls served as protection from nomadic raids.

Day 9: Khiva to Bukhara

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning checkout of your hotel and drive approximately nine hours (480km) to Bukhara. Driving through the desert, view the changing scenery from saksaul trees to the Amudarya riverbank as you travel. Upon arrival check into your hotel for a two-night stay.

Road conditions can be poor between Khiva and Bukhara, so your patience is appreciated today.

Destination Information

Bukhara - A city which has a long history spanning 2,500 years and what was an integral part of the Persian Empire for centuries. Within the city, there are more than 350 mosques and 100 religious colleges. Bukhara was part of what came to be called the 'Golden Road', the meeting point of the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road, and hence a great centre for commerce, religion and culture.

In 1913, James Flecker's poem '*The Golden Journey to Samarkand*' was published to acclaim (and a little controversy) in England and immortalised the ancient trade path between Uzbekistan's most significant towns, Bukhara and Samarkand – "For lust of knowing what should not be known.....we make the Golden Journey to Samarkand".

The city's most famous landmark is the Kalon Minaret, which dates back to 1127AD. It is said that when Genghis Khan attacked and destroyed the rest of the city, he left the minaret standing, supposedly because he was struck by its beauty.

Day 10: Bukhara

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today explore the many interesting sites within this incredible city, one of the most famous names of medieval Islam. Gaze at the unique and legend filled Kalon Minaret. After exploring the Ark of Bukhara, visit the Bolo Hauz Mosque. Later this afternoon visit the mausoleum of Ismail Samanid and the ornate Aziz Khan and Ulugbek Madrasahs. Sightseeing around the central city, will be for approximately five hours with leisurely walking around these sites.

Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Bukhara, approximately USD7 in total.

Destination Information

Kalon Minaret - One of the most prominent landmarks of the city, Kalon Minaret was constructed in 1127 by the Karakhanid ruler Arslan Khan. An amazing structure standing at 47m tall, there are 14 ornamental bands and 10m deep foundations.

Ark of Bukhara - The fortified residence of the rulers of Bukhara but also housed palaces, temples, barracks, offices, the mint, warehouses, workshops, stables, an arsenal, a prison and nowadays a museum.

Bolo Hauz Mosque - Translated the name of the mosque means "The Mosque of the Bala Lake", which refers to the octagonal pool located in the public forecourt lined with stone steps. Built in 1712, the mosque is splendid and still functional – believers still visit to pray every day.

Ulugbek Madrassah - Built in 1417 as a center for science and astronomy in conservative Bukhara. Its design incorporates astral designs into its decorative facades. The madrassah could seat up to 80 students, with many graduates becoming eminent scholars and poets.

Day 11: Bukhara to Samarkand

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning drive to Gijduvan, located approximately 60km from Bukhara. Explore the city for one and a half hour and visit a ceramic centre. Continue your drive for approximately four hours (260km) to Samarkand. Upon arrival check into your hotel for a two-night stay.

Destination Information

Gijduvan - The town's artisans are well known for a distinct style of pottery, which is turquoise bluish in colour. Their skills are passed down from father to son over the generations.

Samarkand - With a population of approximately 400,000, Samarkand is the second largest city of Uzbekistan. The real glory of Samarkand began in 329BC when Alexander the Great conquered and destroyed the nearby capital, Macaranda. According to local history, when Alexander first visited here he declared "I heard that Samarkand was beautiful but never thought that it could be so beautiful and majestic".

After Alexander's reign, the city fell under the rule of the Persian Empire, and became the capital of the Mongol Prince Tamerlane in the 13th Century. The finest builders, craftsmen, philosophers and scientists were invited to Samarkand and the reputation of its refined civilisation grew until Samarkand was a city of legend and wonder along the Golden Road. From here the Silk Road diverged; east to China, south to India and west to Persia.

Day 12: Samarkand

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today explore some of the most significant sites in Samarkand and its city centre, involving approximately six hours of leisurely walking. Visit Timur's Guri Amir Mausoleum and Registan Square, the most spectacular architectural ensemble in Central Asia and heart of the city.

See the three stunning madrassas: Ulug Bek, Tillya Kori and Sher Dor. Later, visit Shah-I-Zinda and Bibi-Khanum Mosque before returning to your hotel.

Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Samarkand, approximately 14USD in total.

Destination Information

Timur's Guri Amir Mausoleum - The famous blue ribbed domed mausoleum that rises over the old city's rooftops. Tamerlane was laid under a massive slab of green jade, said to be the largest Jade stone in the world.

Registan Square - The Square is lined on three sides by sparkling turquoise tiled buildings of the Sher Dor and Tilla Qori madrassas. The interior and exterior facades of the madrassas are decorated with ornamental glazed brick, mosaics and carved marble. The square is considered an architectural gem representing the finest in Islamic Art and, most remarkably, a rare depiction of an animal's form. It was here that royal proclamations were read out and where justice was dispensed. The huge colourful bazaar is located nearby and one can buy nuts, dried and fresh fruit, spices, honey and a multitude of other goods.

Shah-I-Zinda - A mausoleum complex located northeast of the city, the names translates to 'Tomb of the Living King'. This refers to the important Muslim shrine in the region, the complex of quiet rooms around what is most likely the grave of Qusam ibn-Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Mohammed who is thought to have brought Islam to this area in the 7th century.

Bibi-Khanym Mosque - One of the most impressive historic mosques in Central Asia, construction on Bibi-Khanym was started by Timur in 1399 and completed shortly before his death. The mosque commemorates Timur's wife and was the jewel in his empire.

Day 13: Samarkand to Tashkent

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Ulugh Bek was more famous as an astronomer than a ruler and this morning visit the Ulugh Bek Observatory to see the 'stars above Samarkand'. Next, explore the ancient ruins of Afrosiab, a settlement of early Samarkand left abandoned to the elements.

Stop at a papermaking workshop located in Konigil village before arriving at Samarkand Railway Station and boarding the Afrosiyob train for a 2 ½ hour journey to Tashkent. On arrival, transfer to your hotel and enjoy dinner.

Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Samarkand.

Destination Information

Ulugh Beg Observatory - Uleg Beg was Tamerlane's grandson and a great astronomer. During his rule in the 15th century, he summoned the great minds of the Islamic world to Samarkand.

Afrosiab Settlement - Situated in the Chupan Ata Hills, this ancient site was occupied from 500BC to 1220AD. A centre of the Sogdian culture before it was destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th century.

Papermaking Workshop - Samarkand has been famed for its high-quality paper manufacture throughout the ages. In this workshop of talented master, you will see how the rinds of the mulberry trees are turned into a paper.

Tashkent - Rebuilt after the 1966 earthquake, Tashkent is now a thriving capital city. The modern layout dominated by Soviet era inspired architecture is interspersed with hidden pockets of a once traditional agricultural community still visible in the mud walled homes and bustling bazaars.

Day 14: Tashkent

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Spend a full day touring the famous sights of Uzbekistan's capital. Journey back in time exploring the old town's sights; Barak Khan Madrassah and Kukeldash Madrassah and Tila Shaikh mosque and their archives – known for rare copies of the Koran. Stop at Chorsu Bazaar – the oldest market in Tashkent.

This afternoon visit the Museum of Applied Arts; wander through the 1966 earthquake memorial, Independence Square and Amir Timur Maydoni. Your last stop will be to the Tashkent Metro, with its opulently decorated marble, granite and chandeliers.

Destination Information

Barak Khan Madrassah - Built in the 16th century with funds donated by the Tashkent ruler Navruz Akhmed. Today this is the oldest educational institution in Tashkent. Though this madrassah is no longer used for its original purpose, it attracts attention for its well-preserved architectural features.

Kukeldash Madrassah - One of the biggest and one of the most famous historical monuments in Tashkent. The 16th-century Islamic school is built of mud bricks decorated with majolica and painted ceramic tiles.

Museum of Applied Arts - Founded in 1937, the museum currently displays over 4,000 exhibits, highlighting the history of Uzbekistan's decorative art. There are samples of woodcarving, ceramics, minting, Jeweller's art, gold-embroidery art, as well as the samples of mass production of local industry of the past centuries.

Independence Square - The main and most beautiful square in the heart of the city. Commemorating the country's freedom it has been a popular destination for both locals' and tourists because of its beautiful monuments and fountains.

Amir Timur Maydoni - Founded in 1882 and originally called Konstantinovsky Square. In 1994 it was renamed to honour the great Amir Timur who founded the Timurid Empire, which lasted for 200 years. A famous monument to the great leader stands in the square's centre.

Day 15: Tashkent to Khujand

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Set out today overland as we drive from Tashkent to Khujand, Tajikistan via the Oybek border where immigration formalities will take place. The total journey will be approximately three hours of driving.

On arrival into Khujand and after checking into the hotel your city tour will commence. Walk through Pushkin Square to Kamoli Khujandi Theatre and visit Timur Malik's Fortress before viewing the exhibits of the Sughd Museum. Stroll through Panjshanbe Bazaar – one of the oldest bazaars in Tajikistan. End your day at Arbob Palace, a building that has historical significance to modern day Tajikistan.

Destination Information

Tajikistan – A small but stunning country with soaring mountains, valleys dotted with wildflowers and pristine lakes abound. Culturally charming and naturally striking, Tajikistan emanates simplicity and remoteness.

Khujand – One of Tajikistan's oldest cities dating back 2,500 years and founded by Alexander the Great as his eastern most settlement. Known as Leninabad during the USSR occupation it reverted to its original name in 1992.

Pushkin Square – Named in honour of the great Russian poet and surrounded by neo classical buildings and fountains.

Kamoli Khujandi Theatre - Found in Pushkin Square and named in honour of the famous Persian Poet who was born in Khujand.

Timur Malik Fortress – For over 2,500 years this fortress has been destroyed by conquerors and rebuilt a new by the local people who view this castle as the heart of the city.

Sughd Museum - This museum holds hundreds of cultural artifacts that represent the history of the Sughd region of Tajikistan.

Panjshanbe Bazaar – A colourful and vibrant bazaar, the name of which translates from the Persian word for Thursday.

Arbob Palace – Built in the 1950's and modelled on the winter gardens in St Petersburg. It was in 1992 at this Palace, Tajikistan was official declared independent from the Soviet Union. This was where the design of the Tajik flag was chosen soon after.

Day 16: Khujand to Panjikent

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning travel to Istaravshan, located in the northern foothills of the Tajik mountain range. Spend time visiting Mug Teppe Fortress, Kok Gumbaz Mosque built in 1436 and the Sar I Mazor complex. Continue driving through beautiful Shakhristan Gorge and have lunch in a local restaurant before driving five hours to Panjikent. On arrival check into your hotel and enjoy dinner.

Please note: Due to the limited accommodation in Penjikent the group will be split into two different hotels of similar standard that are opposite each other on the same street.

Destination Information

Mug Teppe Fortress - Located northeast of Khujand and standing on top a hill, this Fortress has few remnants of its original mud walls but provides a great vantage point from which to admire the city and contrasting mountain views.

Kok Gumbaz – This mosque was built by Ulugbek (Tamerlane's grandson) and its name translates to 'blue dome'. Found under the building are four tombstones of kinsmen and two mausoleums.

Penjikent - On the banks of the Zeravshan River and located on a high valley terrace, this small city with a population of 35,000 has a history dating back to the Silk Road.

Day 17: Panjikent to Dushanbe

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Panjikent was a major city established in the 5th Century by the Sogdians. Visit Rudaki Historic ethnographic Museum and its historical artefacts followed by exploring a replica of an Ancient Panjikent Settlement. After walking through the local bazaar and viewing the cities mosque, enjoy lunch at a traditional Chaikhana (teahouse).

Journey approximately five hours to the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe. En route stop at the breathtaking Lake Iskanderkul, surrounded by mountains and spend time here taking in the memorable view.

Destination Information

Rudaki Historic Ethnographic Museum - Opened in 2001, with a majority of the collection from archaeological excavations throughout Tajikistan. The most valuable exhibits date from the Middle Ages.

Lake Iskanderkul - Named after Alexander the Great, this lake is a popular attraction due to its glacier origin and vivid turquoise waters.

Dushanbe - With Soviet era pastel buildings and public squares contrasted with the outer hinterlands of mountains and rural villages Dushanbe is one of the most charming capital cities in Central Asia. The name originated from the Tajik word Monday because of a once popular market that would be held each week on that specific day.

Day 18: Dushanbe

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

A full day tour of the capital will include walking through the cities Botanical gardens, Rudaki Park and stopping at the Ismoili Somoni monument. Continue to Kohi Navruz a cultural palace, which demonstrates traditional Tajik architecture.

After lunch visit the Fortress of Hissor, though a majority of which is reconstructed it is reflective of a once a powerful presence the fortress held in Tajik history. Whilst here visit the Medrassah Kuhna and the Museum of Tajik Way of life.

Destination Information

Rudaki Park - A scenic landscaped park with flower gardens, fountains and statues. Enjoy the peaceful setting and people watch like with the locals.

Ismoili Somoni Monument - Standing 25 meters high, this statue commemorates the founder of the Samanid dynasty from the 10th century.

Fortress of Hissor - As a strategic outpost, the Fortress of Hissor has been destroyed over 20 times throughout history by the likes of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Tiumr. Each time it has been rebuilt and today there are remnants of architecture that remain mostly from the 18th Century.

Day 19: Dushanbe to Almaty

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Spend the morning viewing the exhibits at the Museum of National Antiquities, showcasing Tajikistan and its prominence throughout Central Asian history. Transfer to the airport and board your flight to Almaty, Kazakhstan. Once at your hotel the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.

Destination Information

Museum of National Antiquities - Opened in 2001 with a focus on archaeological artefacts highlighting Tajikistan Islamic and pre Islamic history. The centerpiece is a 14 meter reclining Buddha in Nirvana, dating back 1,400 years made by the Kushan civilisation.

Kazakhstan - Where the ancient and modern, traditions and innovation intertwine. Kazakhstan is the world's ninth largest country and the most developed of the 'Stans'. It was the last member of the Soviet Union to declare independence from Russia in 1991.

Almaty - Capital of Kazakhstan until 1997, today Almaty is the country's largest metropolis and is still considered its cultural and trading hub. Situated beneath snowcapped peaks, experience this emerging country's multifaceted ethnic patchwork.

Day 20: Almaty

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Start today with a visit to the Central State Museum, where the history of Kazakhstan is represented through 120,000 exhibits. Later visit Republic Square and its Independence Monument, Abai Opera Theatre, Central Mosque and the Presidential Residence. Marvel at the Zenkov Cathedral, made only of wood.

This afternoon drive 15 kilometres to Medeo and see the famous ice skating rink set in the picturesque valleys surrounded by mountains.

Destination Information

Central State Museum - First established in 1931, the museum displays significant historical, archaeological, political and cultural artefacts and is one of the largest collections in Central Asia.

Republic Square - Dominating the centre of Almaty and measuring 580 metres length. The Republic Squares main attraction is the Independence Monument adorned with a statue of a Saks Warrior and a flying winged leopard; a symbol of modern day Kazakhstan.

Zenkov Cathedral - Built between 1904 and 1907 and constructed entirely of wood, including the nails. Zenkov Cathedral showcases distinctive colourful hues is once again a practicing Russian Orthodox Church having been used as a museum previously during the Soviet Era.

Medeo - The highest mountainous sporting complex at 1961 metres above sea level and home to the world's largest speed skating rink. The pure mountain water used for the skating rink is attributed to over 120 world records being placed here in recent times.

Day 21: Almaty to Karakol via Charyn

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Start early this morning (approximately 7:30am) and drive 210 kilometres (approximately four hours' drive) to the Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan border stopping en route if time permits at Nura Village to meet with a family that has breed Golden Eagles for hunting purposes throughout generations.

Visit magnificent Charyn Canyon and its Valley of the Castles, named due to the pillars and rock formations forming imposing, almost lookalike manmade structures. You can choose to hike down towards the valley floor and climb back up again or observe the canyon rim from above. Your visit here will be one and a half to two hours.

Continue to the border and after border formalities are completed, we will travel 200 kilometres (approximately four hours) to Karakol, where you will proceed to your hotel and check in for an overnight stay.

Destination Information

Charyn Canyon - Over three million years ago both wind and water sculpted Charyn's red sandstone to form today's fantastical shapes and shadows. Measuring approximately 150 kilometres long and up to 300 metres deep in some areas, the Canyon's River Valley is fed by the local Tianshan Mountains.

Kyrgyzstan - The population of Kyrgyzstan is relatively small, roughly five million people with the main ethnic groups represented by Kyrgyz (approximately 62 per cent), Russians (approximately 14 per cent) and Uzbeks (approximately 14 per cent). The country is land-locked and shares borders with Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Over 90 per cent of the country is covered by often-arid mountains, which separate its demographic and economic centres: the Chui Valley in the North and the Ferghana Valley in the South.

Karakol - Founded as a Russian military outpost in 1869; the population surged during the 1880s when thousands of Chinese Muslims (called Dungan in Kyrgyzstan or Hui in China) settled here, fleeing persecution in China. The name of the town has alternated between Karakol and Przhevalsk several times over the past century. The Russian explorer, Nikolai Przhevalsky died here in 1888 of typhoid while preparing for an expedition to Tibet, thus the city was renamed Przhevalsk in his honour. After local protests, the town returned to its original name in 1921, then again to Przhevalsk in 1939 and finally restored to Karakol in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union.

Day 22: Karakol

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Rise early this morning and visit the striking Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, which was completed in 1895 and tour a Chinese mosque. All touring this morning is at a comfortable pace.

In the afternoon, travel to the Valley of the Flowers and Jetty-Orguz where you can enjoy a light hike through the magnificent canyon of red sandstone. Sightseeing in the canyon involves three hours of leisurely walking on a bush track. Although this is a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and will be walking over uneven ground at altitude. If you take part in this activity, you must be able to complete it independently otherwise, you will need to wait near the tour bus.

Destination Information

Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral - This wooden church was built in 1894 on the ruins of a brick church. It is said that during construction, no nails or metal fastenings were used.

Chinese Mosque - The mosque was constructed in 1907, in the style of a Chinese temple for the local Dungans, yet was built in the Kyrgyz traditional wood feathering style instead of metal nail construction.

Jetty-Oguz Gorge - A lush valley located 30km outside Karakol. The name translates to 'seven bulls' in the Kyrgyz language, referring to the red sandstone rock formations that resemble seven angry bulls. Famous for its hot springs and the beautiful scenery.

Day 23: Karakol to Ashu Village

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Explore the interesting Przhevalskii Museum this morning before travelling to Semenov Gorge. Enjoy a gentle hike at the Gorge for approximately one hour in duration. You will need to climb some hills and slopes with moments of walking over uneven ground. All passengers who take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently otherwise you will need to wait near the bus.

Drive two hours along the northern shore of Lake Issy Kul and enjoy lunch at Cholpon-Ata.. Afterwards, explore the nearby petroglyphs of ibex, wolves and deer that date back to the 8th century at the open-air museum. Continue a further two-hour drive to Chon-Kemin Valley for an overnight stay in Ashu Village.

Please note: Accommodation in Ashu Village will be in a 40-room guesthouse. This is an opportunity to experience the lifestyle and hospitality of local people. All rooms are private ensuite.

Destination Information

Przhevalskii Museum - Displays fascinating exhibits on the Issy Kul petroglyphs, Scythian bronze artefacts, and a short history of the geology and mineral exploitation in the region.

Semenov Gorge - Approximately 30km in length, Semenov Gorge is located 40km from Karakol. Flowing through the gorge is Ak-Suu River, which begins at a glacier.

Chon-Kemin Valley - The spectacular valley, which measures almost 80km deep, is famous for its natural beauty, abundant wildlife and mountain lakes.

Day 24: Ashu Village to Bishkek**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

This morning enjoy a leisurely walk in the foothills of the mountains that surround Chon-Kemin Valley (approximately two hours in duration) and experience traditional Kyrgyz village life. If you do not wish to take part in this activity, you will have time free at leisure at Ashu Village. Return to the village for lunch before departing and driving two hours and 30 minutes to Bishkek. Stop en route to see Burana Tower, a monument from the 11th century.

Upon arrival in Bishkek, visit Ala-Too Square to watch the changing of the guard ceremony. Visit the Independence Monument, view Parliament House and the only remaining Lenin Monument in Central Asia. Your last stop will be Victory Square before transferring to your hotel.

Destination Information

Burana Tower - This 11th century octagonal monument was once a taller minaret until earthquakes caused significant damage. Today the tower, castle foundations and grave markers are the ruins of the capital of the Karakhanids.

Bishkek - The capital of Kyrgyzstan has a population of 900,000. The city did not develop until 1825, when the Kokand Khanate enclosed the site as a fortress. By 1864, the Russians had captured the fortress and in 1878, founded the city of Bishkek. Bishkek is a city of wide boulevards and marble-facade public buildings combined with numerous Soviet-style apartment blocks, laid out on a grid pattern. Most streets are flanked on both sides by narrow irrigation channels that water the innumerable trees, which provide shade during the hot summers.

Ala Too Square - Built in 1984 to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Soviet Era. Today the square serves as a site for state events. Its main centrepiece is a statue of Manas in celebration of the 20th anniversary of independence.

Day 25 - 26: Bishkek to Australia via Dubai**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Today transfer early this morning to Bishkek Airport and board your flight to Dubai. On arrival, you will be transferred to your hotel for a day use room. Your room will be ready upon check in. The rest of the day is yours at leisure before boarding your overnight flight to Australia. Due to flight schedules you may have a connecting flight and therefore do not require a day use room in Dubai.

Please note: It is recommended you bring a change of clothes and selected toiletries (within carry on fluid limits) in your carry-on luggage so they are readily accessible for use in your hotel room for day use stay.

Ancient Lands of Central Asia Travel Information

Visas

Entry visas are required for all foreigners wishing to visit Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Wendy Wu Tours' Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining the visas. We will supply you with all paperwork and submit the visa application on your behalf. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6-months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have no consular representation in Australia and applications will need to be sent to our consulates overseas for visa processing three months before the departure date. The Uzbekistan Consulate has implemented an online visa processing system for all passengers who require a tourist visa to visit Uzbekistan. The visa for Uzbekistan is valid for 15 days from the date of entry (issued as per dates specified on visa form). An individual visa will not be issued in your passport for Uzbekistan. It will be issued as a group visa, which will be held by the Tour Manager. Effective from 24th July 2012, Australian passport holders can travel to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan for up to 60 days without a visa.

Visa application forms for the Ancient Lands tour and all relevant documentation are due in our office 90 days prior to departure; if received after this date your Uzbekistan visa will not be able to be processed in time (as it needs to be sent to Singapore for processing along with the rest of the group as it is issued as a group visa). Passports will be returned with your final documentation four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15AUD courier fee will apply. Please note this may not be possible given passports need to be sent to the Singapore.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in Central Asia

Central Asian cuisine is diverse and flavoursome with a legacy stretching back thousands of years. It is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the groups' day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

In Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the cuisine is influenced by Middle Eastern and Turkic (or Mediterranean) dishes – yoghurts, dried fruit, legumes, fruit vinegars, or mild spices like cumin season the common dishes such as lagman (handmade noodles), shashlyk (kebabs), naan (flat bread) and plov (rice pilaf dish). Mutton and chicken are the only meats available in most areas and feature in most dishes. Local breakfast dishes include naan and airan (like sour cream), savoury noodles with vinegar and green tea. You may also be served a fried egg, jam, honey or toast. Black tea and coffee can usually be requested. Fresh cow's milk is not generally available.

Hotels and restaurants in this region are not generally accustomed to serving many western tourists, however by default tend to 'spice down' the dishes, due to the tourists they do service coming from Europe. The food is always local in style and derives from what is in season and harvested locally. Vegetarian only alternatives are

not usually available in Kyrgyzstan though Uzbekistan restaurants are more flexible. There are always plenty of salads, vegetables and bread offered at most meals. In remote areas, lunch may be prepared as 'picnic style', by the hotel that morning, or your guides may organise a simple meal at a local restaurant. Lunch is the main meal of the day, with dinner usually a lighter version of lunch. If you have food allergies or any other preferences please make them known to your guide/s at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met though 'no guarantees can be made'. Long driving distances, road conditions or flight times may delay or alter your meal times, which could mean a dedicated meal is replaced by those supplied on the aircraft.

Despite the Muslim culture, drinking alcohol is acceptable and expected in this ex-Soviet region, especially Kyrgyzstan more so than Uzbekistan. The most popular mealtime drink is Chay (green tea) and is available at most meals, usually straight but hosts may add a large block of sugar crystal to the pot, or even your glass! Black tea and coffee are not always served, however can usually be requested. Expect to be offered vodka (not included in your tour price) at every meal!

If you like, you can bring some supplements with you from home. Tea/coffee bags, UHT milk containers, vegemite, instant soups or noodles, biscuits, energy bars, milk powder sachets, are all a good idea – consider your luggage weight though! There are numerous small supermarkets and shops at every town and village along the way where you can buy odd items e.g. instant noodles, muesli and chocolate bars, biscuits, drinks, chips, cakes and lollies.

Accommodation

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a standard hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three star standards, please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Central Asia. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

You will be travelling through a rarely visited and undeveloped area of Kyrgyzstan for a few days. This is a remote area with villages, nomadic settlements, very small towns and little in the way of tourist facilities. We have designed this itinerary to use the accommodation offered by the CBT home stay project, staying in local houses/guest houses for a few nights. The CBT 'Community Based Tourism' project started in Kochkor Village, offering income to local families and guides while providing tourists the opportunity to stay with a local family, in their simple homes, rather than in run-down Soviet era hotels. It is not essential to bring a sleeping bag; bed linen is provided at each type of accommodation and is adequate for the night temperatures. You could bring a 'sleep sheet' insert to use under the linen, just in case, though it is generally not required. Types of accommodation you may encounter on this tour include:

Local home stay: These provide basic yet comfortable accommodation in actual local homes, so group members may be staying in a number of different houses near each other. As these are people's real homes, the accommodation and facilities may vary between houses, generally every couple/single person will be accommodated in their own room. Homes in small towns of this part of Kyrgyzstan may have town-supplied electricity restricted for an amount of time. Dedicated western toilet and shower facilities are shared among the guests within each home. Dinner is served as a group in one of the larger houses and breakfast is generally served in the house you are staying at.

Guesthouse: These provide basic yet comfortable rooms in a small guesthouse. Every couple/single person will have their own room, western toilets and showers are shared, similar to a hostel. Breakfast and dinner is served in the restaurant.

Camping: For one night you will be camping at the Darvaza crater. A tent will be provided though there are no bathroom/shower facilities here.

Three-star hotel: You will be staying in hotels of three-star standards or above for the remainder of the tour. The day-to-day itinerary above will indicate when you are staying in the local home stays.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner-city roads in Central Asia have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in Central Asia have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

Passengers will need to change coaches when crossing the Turkmenistan/Uzbekistan border and the Uzbekistan/Tajikistan border. There will be no change on vehicle required with crossing the Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan border.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-seat flight allocation is not available.

Rail: On this tour, you will take one train journey from Samarkand to Tashkent in Uzbekistan. You will travel in economy class with air conditioning.

Development in Central Asia

Though parts of Central Asia match the west in modernity and technological advances, it is important to remember that this is still a developing region and as such, many aspects of tourism do not have the solid infrastructure and safety standards as seen here in Australia. It is important that our guests travel to Central Asia with an open mind and a sense of humour. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guide.

Central Asia public holidays

Ramadan, the Islamic festival of sacrifice will fall from the 4th May to the 4th June 2019 and 23rd of April to 23rd of May June 2020. This festival is characterised by the faithful abstaining from consuming food and drink (including alcohol) between the hours of sunrise and sunset. After sunset, you will find the locals celebrate nightly with an iftar- a meal at sunset, which breaks the fast, followed by pre-dawn meal -Suhoor. Travellers are not expected to adhere to these customs, with food and drink available during daylight hours. Some businesses and tourist sites opening hours may be affected; though overall, there will be minimal disruption if your tour is travelling between these dates. Ramadan is an opportunity to travel through this region, witnessing this fascinating national holiday for yourself.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs; so in a selection of cities, we will visit a workshops or factories which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides.

Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in USD and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

Packing list and Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended when travelling to towns outside of the major cities that extra care is taken when exchanging money. You should only change money at officially authorised currency exchanges. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

In Central Asia the US Dollar is still the easiest currency to exchange. You should be able to use credit cards at some hotels and department stores. In other towns, you will find banking facilities less reliable and may encounter staff that refuse to deal with a currency they are unfamiliar with.

In Kyrgyzstan only fresh, undamaged US Dollars, printed after 2001 will be accepted for exchange. Very few establishments accept credit cards. There are only a handful of ATM machines in cities and none in rural areas.

Upon entering Uzbekistan, any foreign currency that is brought into the country must be declared on a customs declaration form. This form will be either given to you on the incoming flight or you can pick one up in the airport Arrivals Hall. It is better to bring US Dollars for easy exchange. A few select ATMs can be found although do not rely on these as they can be unreliable. Credit cards are only accepted in some hotels and in a limited number of shops, therefore make sure you bring a sufficient amount of cash of different denominations.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$350AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. In your Final Documentation an Optional Excursion Sheet will be included outlining the activities available in each city and local cost associated. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Mosques and Madrassas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

The government of Turkmenistan is intending to make the country smoke free. As a result, smoking has been prohibited in ALL public places, including streets, parks and airports. You may find specially equipped areas in some restaurants and hotels. The maximum amount of cigarettes allowed to be brought into Turkmenistan is two packs.

Apart from smoking, it is also highly advisable to ensure any first aid kit you may carry in Turkmenistan DOES NOT include any medications containing tramadol, codeine, morphine or opiates. **All of such medications (in any form and quantity) have been prohibited** from import to Turkmenistan or transfer across the country's territory. A written and authorised prescription from a licensed doctor **will not count**.

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Travelling on an Active Paced Tour

We hope you are looking forward to what we are sure will be a trip of a lifetime. Before you embark on this adventure, we ask you to consider the points listed below that relate to our active paced tours. This will ensure you understand what is involved with an active paced tour and therefore help you decide if your chosen tour is right for you.

This is to ensure that your tour runs as smoothly as possible for you and your fellow tour members.

Please consider the following aspects of active paced tours prior to confirming your arrangements;

- ☐ While we believe that age is no barrier, please give special consideration to the fact that medical assistance and public infrastructure can be limited in these areas.
- ☐ There will be long periods of physical activity, including walking, climbing of stairs, in/out of boats. Tour participants who will travel with a cane/walking stick may come across difficulties. It is our experience that using a cane/walking stick in these areas where there are rough and uneven surfaces, stairs to climb and high altitudes, becomes difficult.
- ☐ Only limited meal options will be available. People with special dietary requirements should expect difficulties on these tours. Please understand that depending on the trip you are taking, you may be given very little or no meat.
- ☐ Your tour may include basic accommodation facilities including home stays, guest houses, truck stops and tented accommodation. This may mean, no or limited hot water, and no private bathroom facilities.
- ☐ There will be long periods of driving on often unsealed, rural and bumpy roads in vehicles ranging from tour coaches to local jeeps and canter vehicles.
- ☐ Altitude affects people in many different ways and a certain level of fitness is required in order to limit the effects. Please discuss how to manage altitude sickness with a health care professional.
- ☐ Overnight trains only have basic bedding in four berth compartments with limited or no ladder facilities to climb to the top bunk. You may be sharing with other tour members or locals.
- ☐ Some tours may have sightseeing en route to the next destination. Therefore participation is required or you will need to remain with the coach until the rest of the group has finished touring.

National Escorts/ Local Guides will endeavor to provide rest stops in your itinerary where possible. Please be advised that some days may have a more physical programme than others.

If you are comfortable with the above mentioned aspects of travelling on an active paced tour, we look forward to welcoming you on what is sure to be a unique and memorable experience.

However, if you have any hesitations please contact your valued travel agent or our reservations department to discuss the tour further or explore alternative options.

Last updated 29/03/19