Take a journey along 2,000-plus-years of Central Asian Silk Road history. Discover the colorful markets and Swiss Alps like scenery of Kyrgyzstan, the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva and travel through stunning scenery in the footsteps of great explorers and conquerors.

- Discover the mysterious and exotic Samarkand
- Learn about the ancient silk production
- Discover holy Bukhara and Khiva
- Mingle with nomads in Kyrgyzstan
- Lose yourself in vibrant bazaars
- Spend a night at the Tash Rabat Caravanserai

Road to Samarkand
Go Beyond Tour | 23 Days | Physical Level 3

To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent
Visit wendywutours.com.au
The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping and early check in or late check out. These are all payable locally.

Go Beyond:
Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime.

Physical Level 3:
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.

The Road to Samarkand tour is rated as a physical level 3 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. This itinerary also drives through areas of high altitude. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this itinerary. Driving over the Moldo-Ashuu Pass you will reach the highest point of this tour at 3,346m. It is recommended to stay well hydrated and well rested in areas of high altitude.

- On some days driving distances are very long and it will take the whole day to reach your destination
- The 2 hikes will generally last around 1-2 hours at a time, sometimes on an incline and mostly on uneven ground
- There will be a few days of walking whilst sightseeing with 5 – 7 hours a day
- In Kyrgyzstan, there will be a few nights spent in accommodation called ‘home stays’ in local people’s homes or guest houses.
- In Kyrgyzstan you will stay overnight in a yurt camp. Yurts are the traditional home of nomads in Central Asia. They are made from a wooden frame and layers of felt and canvas erected on a wooden platform.

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.
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 civilization. See the spectacular alpine scenery of Kyrgyzstan, which contrasts to the breathtaking ancient cities and classic Islamic architecture of Uzbekistan.

The tour is 23 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 Bishkek and end the tour on Day 21 in Tashkent. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

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.

This is a new itinerary which has been improved on the previous Wendy Wu Central Asia itineraries we have operated successfully over the last 15 years.

Day 1: Fly to Dubai and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Fly to Dubai. Upon arrival in Dubai you will be met by a local Wendy Wu representative and transferred to your transit hotel where you can freshen up and relax before your flight to Bishkek late this evening.

Please note some flight departures may depart the evening before the first day of the tour.

*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. Your main luggage will be checked in from Australia all the way to Bishkek.*
Day 2: Bishkek

Travel overnight to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Upon arrival transfer to your hotel for early check-in.

The remainder of the day is at your leisure to rest before a lunch and welcome meeting.

After the meeting, take a city tour and visit Ala Too Square, the White House and Oak Park.

Some tour members may wish to stay in the hotel to rest for the entire day. Please notify your local National Escort if you wish to do this.

Destination Information

Bishkek - The capital of Kyrgyzstan has a population of 1 million people. 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.

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 3: Bishkek

This afternoon, drive 1 hour south to Ala Archa National Park where you will stop at the park’s base camp. From here, your guide will take you on a 1 hour leisurely hike through the National Park whilst you take in the picturesque scenery of snow-capped mountains and freshwater rivers. Although this is a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and walk over uneven ground at altitude. All participants who take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently, otherwise you will need to wait on the bus.

Return to Bishkek where you will have a free afternoon.

Destination Information

Ala Archa National Park – Ala-Archa is an alpine national park in the Tian Shan Mountains. The name AlaArcha translates as ‘Bright Juniper’ from Kyrgyz as the whole gorge is covered with various trees including the main one – juniper.
This morning, you will visit the 12th Century Burana Tower and enjoy the breath-taking views along the road as you continue another 3 hours to Cholpon-Ata. The town is located at the northern shore of Lake Issyk Kul and is known for its large open-air collection of petroglyphs of ibex, wolves and deer etched into glacial stone that date back to the 8th century.

Afterwards, cruise on Lake Issyk Kul and view the stunning, alpine scenery. It can get cold on the 1-hour cruise, so we recommend you bring a warm jacket.

**Destination Information**

**Burana Tower** – Burana Tower is a large minaret located east of Bishkek. The site, which includes the tower itself, reconstructions of mausoleums found on the site, remains of a citadel, collection of balbals (grave stones used by nomadic Turkic peoples), and petroglyphs now functions as a museum. The tower was originally 45 m high, however, over the centuries a number of earthquakes caused significant damage to the structure. The last major earthquake in the 15th century destroyed the top half of the tower, reducing it to its current height of 25 m.

**Cholpon-Ata** – The resort town on the northern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul literally means "Venus-father". The town contains numerous large and small sanatoria, hotels and guesthouses to accommodate the many visitors who descend upon the lake in summer months. During the Soviet era it was much frequented by vacationers brought here in organized mass tours from other parts of the USSR. Holidaymakers now usually originate mainly from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The location of the town is very attractive - the view of the imposing alpine ranges of the Tian Shan across the lake is impressive. The first three World Nomad Games were held on the outskirts of Cholpon-Ata in 2014, 2016, and 2018.

Continue this morning with a 3-hour drive to the Russian town of Karakol and check in for a two-night stay.

First visit the picturesque Semenov Gorge to 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. Visit the Kyrchyn Jailoo ethnic village and arrive in Karakol in the early afternoon and check into your hotel.
This afternoon you will visit the interesting Przhevalskii Museum and examine the region’s diverse religious influences with visits to the striking Holy Trinity Orthodox Church and the Chinese mosque from the outside as visits inside are not always guaranteed. All touring this afternoon is at a comfortable pace.

**Destination Information**

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Day 6: Karakol (Sunday Animal Market)**

Rise early and travel to the outskirts of town for the unforgettable Karakol Sunday Animal Market.

In the afternoon, travel to the Valley of Flowers and Jety-Oguz Gorge where you can enjoy a light hike through the magnificent canyon of red sandstone. Sightseeing in the canyon involves 1 hour of leisurely walking on a bush track. Although this is a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and you will be walking over uneven ground at altitude. If you take part in this activity, you must be able to complete it independently. Alternatively, you will need to wait on the bus.

In Jety-Oguz you can also enjoy horseback riding, visit a yurt and have a cup of tea or the Kyrgyz national beverage. Later, visit Irdyk village to see a local mosque and enjoy a home-cooked dinner with a local Dungan family. Learn the fascinating story of why this Muslim Chinese group immigrated to the region 140 years ago, how they made the area their home, and how families today keep their traditional culture and cuisine alive.

**Destination Information**

**Sunday Animal Market** - Early on Sunday mornings Kyrgyzstan's biggest animal markets takes place around 2km north of central Karakol. Typical of such markets, you’ll observe locals bargaining over thoroughbred horses or improbably bundling voluptuous fat-tailed sheep into the back seats of Lada cars amid the backdrop of white-topped mountains.

**Jety-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 7: Bokonbaevo Village

Leaving early, visit Kyzyl-Suu village to see the yurt installation. Travel to Barskoon Gorge to see waterfall named ‘Tears of Leopard’. The gorge is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the Issyk Kul area. Travel to visit Skazka Canyon, also known as Fairy Tale Canyon.

Continue around 2 hours to Bokonbaevo Village and watch a demonstration of Eagle Hunting.

In the afternoon, enjoy free time wandering through the picturesque village of Bokonbaevo and relax on Lake Issyk Kul.

Destination Information

Skazka Canyon - Skazka Canyon, known as Fairy Tale Canyon, was named so due to its bizarre rocky landscape, which for many years has been transformed by wind into fabulous sculptures and formations. Some formations have been named for their similarity to well-known objects, like one set of ridges named "The Chinese Wall".

Eagle Hunting – See a demonstration of hunting with trained golden eagles, often using a sacrificial rabbit trapped for the purpose. This style depicts authentic hunting traditions: this is often how young eagles are trained.

Bokonbaevo Village - Bokonbaevo Village is a cosy and picturesque village on the southern shore of lake Issyk Kul, with green meadows and snow-capped mountains nearby. The surrounding area is sprinkled with yurts. Most people here make a living by either farming or craftsmanship.

Day 8: Tash Rabat Caravanserai

In the late morning, enjoy the breath-taking views along the road as you continue 3 hours to Naryn. Whilst crossing the Dolon Pass the altitude will reach 3,030m. The landscape here in eastern Kyrgyzstan is made up of dramatic valleys and high mountain passes, and whilst crossing the Moldo-Ashuu Pass the altitude will reach 3,346m.

Arrive at the Tash Rabat's historic caravanserai set in a peaceful valley setting where the only habitation is a series of seasonal yurt-camps, where you will spend the night. The setting in a valley is some of the finest landscapes you’ll see in this part of Kyrgyzstan. The altitude here is 3,200 metres so it will get cold at night.

Enjoy a walk around the mountains surrounding Tash Rabat before transferring to Kochkor, the centre of Kyrgyz national felt handicrafts.
Day 9: Kochkor

This morning, visit a local workshop in Kochkor and see the manufacturing of the traditional Kyrgyz wool carpets, called 'shyrdak'. Explore a small local market in the centre of the village and visit a local co-op that provides training for local women in traditional handicrafts.

Destination Information

Kochkor Village – Kochkor is a large village with a population of 15,000. Most of the inhabitants are farmers and shepherds who live in yurts during the summer. Kochkor used to be a stop for Silk Road merchants travelling to and from Kashgar, on the other side of Torugart Pass in China. The pleasant, leafy town overlooked by snow-capped mountains is a base for excursions into the high country.

Day 10: Chong Kemin National Park

There is free time in the morning to explore more of Kochkor.

Some areas of Kyrgyzstan look as if artists have sculpted and painted nature. This was especially true on the drive Kochkor and Chong Kemin National Park.

Arrive at the Chong Kemin National Park in the mid-afternoon. Chong Kemin is a quiet valley with small villages surrounded by magnificent mountains and a fir forest. Take in the daily life in Ashu Village and witness horseback games, a nomadic tradition and custom of the Kyrgyz people.

Please note that today is a long travel day of around 5-6 hours on rough and bumpy unpaved roads. This road is only accessible via 4WD between early June and late September. However, the scenery is the among the most impressive you will see on this tour making for an unforgettable journey.
This morning, transfer the 2 hours to the Bishkek airport for your late afternoon flight to Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan.

On arrival, transfer to your hotel, check in and enjoy dinner.

Tashkent is a pleasant city and the Uzbeki capital. In Soviet times, Tashkent witnessed major growth and demographic changes and after the 1966 earthquake, which levelled most of central Tashkent, a wave of Soviet construction-workers arrived in the city, which still retains a Soviet flavour.

Destination Information

Tashkent – Tashkent at 3 million people is the capital of Uzbekistan, as well as the most populated city in ex-Soviet Central Asia. Tashkent was influenced by Turkic cultures in its early history, before Islam in the 8th century AD. Genghis Khan destroyed the city in 1219, but the city was rebuilt and profited from the Silk Road. Between the 18th to 19th century, the city became an independent city-state, before being re-conquered by the Khanate of Kokand. In 1865, it fell to the Russian Empire, and became the capital of Russian Turkestan.

Day 12: Fergana

In the morning, journey back in time exploring Tashkent’s town 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. see Independence Square and Amir Timur Maydoni. Your last stop will be to the Tashkent Metro, with its opulently decorated marble, granite and chandeliers.

In the afternoon, transfer the 5 hours to the pleasant city of Uzbek city of Fergana.
Day 13: Fergana (Sunday Market)

Rise early and travel to the magnificent Kumpeta Sunday Bazaar in the town of Margilon. Immerse yourself in the colours, sounds and smells of Central Asia’s best market.

Visit the interesting Yodgorlik silk road centre, possibly the finest on the old Silk Road trade route from Beijing to Istanbul.

Later, enjoy a guided tour of Kokand seeing the impressive Khan’s Palace and Jami Mosque Museum.

Drive to a small village to the house of a local craftsman, to visit a traditional Kyrgyz family who manufacture traditional woollen carpets.

Finally, stop off at the Rishton Ceramics Museum to learn about the pottery industry and arrive in Fergana where you will visit Akhmad Al-Fergani Park and the town centre.

Day 14: Tashkent

After a morning at leisure, enjoy a late morning transfer to Tashkent.

On arrival in the late afternoon, transfer to your hotel and check in.

The rest of the afternoon is free to relax in your hotel.
Destination Information

Kumpeta Sunday Bazaar, Margilon - The fantastic Kumtepa Bazaar, 5km west of Margilon centre, is a time capsule full of weathered Uzbek men in traditional clothing exchanging solemn greetings and gossiping over endless pots of tea and the most colourfully dressed female merchants in the country. Rows of handmade khanatlas and adras silk, are both the shopping and the visual highlight.

Yodgorlik Silk Factory - Margilon’s main attraction is the fascinating Yodgorlik silk road centre. Your local guide will take you through traditional methods of silk production from steaming and unravelling the cocoons to the tie-dyeing and weaving of the dazzling hand-woven silk fabrics for which Margilon is famous.

Kokand – As one of Uzbekistan’s three great 19th-century khanates, Kokand is a gateway to the region and stopping point for many travellers. With a historically interesting palace belonging to the former khans, a relaxed vibe and several medressas and mosques hidden in the old town backstreets.

Khan’s Palace - The palace of the Khan of Kokand, with seven courtyards and 114 rooms, was built in 1873, though its dazzling tiled exterior makes it look so perfect that you’d be forgiven for thinking it was as new as the modern park that surrounds it.

Jami Mosque Museum - Kokand’s most impressive mosque, built by Umar Khan in 1812, is centred on a 22m minaret and includes a colourful 100m-long aivan (portico) supported by 98 red-wood columns brought from India.

Rishton Ceramic Museum - Of the thousand local potters who make a living from the legendary local loam, only a handful are considered true masters who still use traditional techniques. Among them is Rustam Usmanov, erstwhile art director of the defunct local collectivised ceramics factory. He runs this ceramics museum out of his home close to Kokand.

Day 15: Samarkand

Transfer to the Tashkent train station for train to Samarkand. Arrive in Samarkand and check into your hotel.

Today, explore some of the most significant sites in Samarkand and its city centre involving approximately 6 hours of leisurely walking. In the morning, visit Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum and Registan Square, which was for many centuries the heart of Samarkand. Wander through a local market and visit the Shah-I-Zinda mausoleum.

Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Samarkand, approximately 14USD in total.
**Day 16: Samarkand**

This morning, you have free time to relax or explore more of central Samarkand. You can relax in your hotel or spend some more time soaking up the atmosphere of the Registan (pictured here).

In the afternoon, spend 3 hours of leisurely walking, visiting the Ulugh Beg Observatory to see the 'stars above Samarkand', a papermaking workshop and the Bibi-Khanum Friday Mosque.

**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 name 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.

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

**Ulugh Beg Observatory** - Ulugh 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.

**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.

**Day 17: Bukhara**

Transfer to the Samarkand for your journey to Bukhara. Arrive in Bukhara and check into your hotel.

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.

To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent  
Visit wendywutours.com.au
Continue onto the ladies’ market and through the beautiful Bukhara oasis to the peaceful 16th century Chor Minor and Chor Bakr necropolis where you will tour the colourful Khonako-Madrassah-Mosque complex.

Later this afternoon, visit the mausoleum of Ismail Samanid and the ornate Aziz Khan and Ulugbek Madrassahs. Sightseeing around the central city, will be for approximately six hours with leisurely walking around these sites.

Have dinner in the scenic Lyabi-Haus area close to the old Jewish quarter. After dinner walk through the markets and shop for decorative clothing and traditional Uzbek crafts. There’s a wealth of small craft studios tucked into the ancient nearby madrassas and trading domes.

*Women should bring a scarf from home, as you are required to cover your head at some attractions today.*

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

**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.

**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.

**Lyabi-Hauz (or Labi-Hauz)** – Lyabi-Hauz is a plaza built in 1620, constructed around a large pool. Derived from Persian and meaning ‘ensemble near the pool’, even today that custom continues as men gather to chat, play dominoes and drink endless pots of tea at the poolside chaikhana.

**Day 18: Bukhara**

This morning visit the summer residence of the last Emir at Sitora-i Mohi Khosa and drive to the pottery town Gijduvan, located approximately 60km from Bukhara. Explore the city for one and a half hours and visit a ceramic centre. Return to Bukhara in the mid-afternoon where the rest of the day is free.
Destination Information

Summer Residence of the Last Bukharan Emir – Situated 4km outside the city, the summer residence dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. The first summer palace was built by Emir Nasrullah Khan.

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.

Day 19: Khiva

Transfer to Khiva in the early morning.

Travelling the 480kms 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.

Destination Information

Khiva – This small town may have been founded up to 2,500 years ago 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.

Day 20: Khiva

Khiva is made for walking. It is compact, well maintained, lived in and bask 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, the Kalta Minor Minaret and the 19th century Tash Hauli Palace decorated in fine china blue tile work.
To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.com.au
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.

**KYRGYZSTAN**

Most nationalities do not require a visa to travel to Kyrgyzstan for up to 60 days, including Australia, Belgium, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, USA and Switzerland. Effective from 24th July 2012, Australian passport holders can travel to Kyrgyzstan as well nearby Kazakhstan for up to 60 days without a visa. Other nationalities should check with their nearest embassy and obtain a visa in advance if required.

**UZBEKISTAN**

From 1st February 2019 many nationalities no longer require a visa for stays of up to 30 days, including most European countries, Great Britain, Australia & Canada. You can check if you are eligible here: [https://e-visa.gov.uz/main](https://e-visa.gov.uz/main)

**E-VISAS**

For nationalities not included in the visa exemption list an e-visa is available. The e-visa is issued for a period of stay in the territory of Uzbekistan up to 30 days with a single entry and is valid for 90 days from the date of issue. Travellers must submit an online application for a visa at least three working days before the planned date of travel to Uzbekistan. The consular fee for processing and issuing an e-visa is US$20 to be paid online. Please check if you are eligible for an e-visa and apply here: [https://e-visa.gov.uz/main](https://e-visa.gov.uz/main)

As this is a multi-country 2 Stans trip, your Kyrgyzstan National Escort from Wendy Wu tours will you be with you from the moment you land in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan until you fly out of Tashkent, Uzbekistan for Dubai.

As Central Asian immigration and customs officials are notoriously strict, please make sure you keep all forms for when you exit the country. A lost customs or immigration form could result in a fine.

When entering Uzbekistan, you will need to complete a foreign currency declaration form when you arrive and keep a copy yourself. Failure to do so accurately or exiting the country with more currency than when you entered may result in delays, fines or the additional sums being confiscated.

Ensure you exchange any unspent local currency prior to departure as there is no generally no exchange offices at the Tashkent international airports.

Some medications available over the counter or by prescription in other countries, such as sleeping tablets, may be illegal or restricted in Uzbekistan. You should declare all prescription medications and other restricted items on arrival in Uzbekistan and carry a copy of the prescription with you.

### Currency

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are very much cash-only economies.

Please bring enough US Dollars in cash with you on your trip cash to cover your entire stay.

There are only a handful of ATM machines in Bishkek and Tashkent although do not rely on these as they can be unreliable. There are no ATMs in smaller cities and rural areas.

To book call **1300 727 998** or visit your local travel agent

Credit cards are only accepted in some hotels and in a limited number of shops, therefore make sure you bring a sufficient amount of USD cash of different denominations.

In smaller cities, you will find banking facilities less reliable and may encounter staff that refuse to deal with a currency they are unfamiliar with, for this reason bring US Dollars with you for easy exchange.

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.

Please bring only fresh, undamaged US Dollars with no blemishes, printed after 2001 as these notes will be accepted for exchange. Notes with any additional markings or notes that are faded are often refused even by official travel exchange offices.

Bring USD notes in mostly 20 and 50 denominations with a handful of 100 USD notes.

**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**

All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive Road to Samarkand 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 Kyrgyzstan 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.

Vegetarian only alternatives are not usually available in Kyrgyzstan, though Uzbekistani 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 any 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, however, ‘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, Kyrgyzstan more so than Uzbekistan. Expect to be offered vodka (not included in your tour price) at every meal! The most popular mealtime drink is Chay (green tea) and is available at most meals, usually straight a large block of sugar crystal may be added to the pot, or even your glass. Black tea and coffee are not always served, however can usually be requested.

If you like, you can bring some supplements with you from home. Tea/coffee bags, 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 in 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 sweets.

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 to four star standards, please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the 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.

You will be travelling through a rarely visited and undeveloped area of eastern 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.

**Yurts**: In Song Kul you will stay overnight in a yurt camp. Yurts are the traditional home of nomads in Central Asia. They are made from a wooden frame and layers of felt and canvas erected on a wooden platform. The interior is filled with warm fabrics as well as ornate wooden furniture. Nomads in Kyrgyzstan live in yurts in the months around summer. Staying in a yurt will allow you to experience the unique and intrinsic aspect of local life in Kyrgyzstan. Although they are not luxurious, they do offer comfortable accommodation in remote regions of the country. Dedicated western toilet and shower facilities are shared among the guests within each yurt.

**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.
Three and four star hotels: You will be staying in hotels of three and four star standards for the remainder of the tour.

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 this region have generally 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 above are approximations only.

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

Development in Central Asia

Although Central Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the AU. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the AU; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. 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 extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from you National Escort/Local Guides.

The former Soviet countries in Central Asia were isolated and less developed by western standards for decades and all levels of infrastructure remain affected today in some way. In the tourism sector, newly built and very good hotels may still have poorly trained staff with an abrupt manner, roads can be in poor condition and officials can be corrupt. The level of English spoken outside of hotels is minimal (except for the children) and the Cyrillic alphabet is used instead of the Latin one (though this is slowly changing in Uzbekistan), so you will find your guides indispensable. We have found that those customers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things can and sometimes do go wrong, are those who find their experience most rewarding.

Road to Samarkand group tour is one of our most unique and adventurous group tours, tracing the ancient Silk Road, including the fabled city of Samarkand. We wish for you to embark on your journey through Central Asia with a level of tolerance and understanding. This region is remote and conditions are not as developed as they are at home. It is essential that all customers recognise the demands of factors such as basic facilities, travelling at altitude and cultural differences. The rewards of seeing and experiencing these lands, so different from your own, are immeasurable and can only be enhanced by an adventurous spirit.

Public holidays and Religious Festivals

Ramadan, the Islamic festival of sacrifice will fall from 23rd April to the 23rd May 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 celebrating 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.

To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.com.au
Ramadan is an opportunity to travel through Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, witnessing this fascinating national holiday for yourself.

**Souvenirs**

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at 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 both a National Escort and local guides. 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 only.

**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.

Most of your touring in Kyrgyzstan is at an altitude between 2500 and 3300 metres above sea level so temperatures can get low during the day and very cold overnight between May and late September. Please ensure you have adequate warm clothing, including to sleep in during our yurt stays.

Temperatures for most of your time spent in Uzbekistan and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan will range from 23c to 35c between May and late September.

Modest clothing such as long lightweight pants and shirts that cover your shoulders for men and women is highly recommended. Headscarves for ladies are required for visits to mosques and madrassas throughout Central Asia. Your National Escort assist you with purchasing a headscarf at a market visit in Bishkek on day 2 of the tour.

To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.com.au
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 5kg. 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.

### 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 $300AUD 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

### After Your booking

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.

To book call 1300 727 998 or visit your local travel agent  Visit wendywutours.com.au
Before You Leave

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 ofte 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 18/07/19