



## Central Asia Wonders in 19 days

### Key information

Countries visited: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

Duration: 19 days / 18 nights

Best season: April - June, August - October

Tour type: Small group / individual (starting from 2 persons)

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### What's included:

All airport and land border transfers, Accommodation in hotels (twin/dbl shared), Meals: breakfast at the hotels, lunches and dinners as per program, Services for private A/C car with driver as per program, Escort English – speaking guide for all days, Train tickets: Tashkent-Samarkand, Domestic air tickets: Khiva-Tashkent, Mary-Ashgabat, Entrance fees to the sites listed, Show program in Bukhara and show with hawks in Kazakhstan, Mineral water 0.5 L per day/per person, Visa support LOI (only to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan)

### What's not included:

International flight tickets, Tips and gratuities, Visa consular fees, Video and photo charges, Portage, Personal expenses, Travel insurance, Services not included in the itinerary

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### Itinerary in brief

Day 1 - Arrival - Almaty City Tour

Day 2 - Almaty - Medeo - Big Almaty Lake - Almaty

Day 3 - Almaty - Bishkek

Day 4 - Bishkek - Issyk Kul

Day 5 - Issyk Kul - Cholpon Ata - Grigorevka Gorge - Bishkek

Day 6 - Bishkek - Tashkent

Day 7 - Tashkent City Tour

Day 8 - Tashkent - Samarkand

Day 9 - Samarkand - Penjikent

Day 10 - Penjikent - Seven Lakes - Samarkand

Day 11 - Samarkand - Bukhara

Day 12 - Bukhara City Tour

Day 13 - Bukhara - Farab - Turkmenabat - Mary

Day 14 - Mary - Ashgabat

Day 15 - Ashgabat City Tour

Day 16 - Ashgabat - Darvaza Crater

Day 17 - Darvaza - Koneurgench - Khiva

Day 18 - Khiva - Tashkent

Day 19 - Departure



## Detailed itinerary

### Day 1

After your arrival at Almaty airport, you will have a transfer to the hotel and check-in. The rest of the day you can just relax after the journey. Almaty is the largest metropolis of Kazakhstan, located in the foothills of the Trans-Ili Alatau mountain range. Until 1997, it was the capital of the state and still remains a commercial and cultural centre. “Almaty” is translated from Kazakh as “the city of apple trees”. This day you'll have a full sightseeing tour around Almaty city. Your sightseeing program will include the main sights of the city: Panfilov Park, Zenkov Wooden Cathedral, St. Nicholas Cathedral, National Musical Instruments Museum, Central State Museum, Almaty's Green Bazaar, and an observatory. The bazaar appeared here 100 hundred years ago and still remains the important trading part of the city. It is an attractive touristic place full of the colorful local atmosphere where one can buy national products, smoked fish, spices, medicinal herbs, cheeses, as well as chat with good-natured friendly sellers and get to know the everyday life of Kazakhs. The tour will proceed to the Kok-Tobe well known for the tallest TV tower in the world. In the park, you will enjoy the view of the city opened from the observation area. The day will end with the short ride from the top of the hill to the centre of the city by the famous Almaty cableway.

*Overnight: Hotel in Almaty*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### Day 2

This day you will visit the picturesque area near Almaty known for its natural gems. The first stop will be in Medeo (25 km) and Shymbulak Mountain resorts where you will have a chance to take a ski lift and reach a height of 3200 meters to enjoy the fresh mountain air and nice views. The tour will proceed to Big Almaty Lake reservoir (45 km), which is providing the whole city with fresh water. It is not just a useful reservoir but also a very picturesque area of mountain ranges covered with Tian-Shan fir-tree, aspen and juniper, and the milky blue lake. On your way back to Almaty (30 km) there will be a stop at the Falcon Farm where people in traditional hunter costumes conduct shows with trained birds - falcons, eagles, owls, vultures, and others.

*Overnight: Hotel in Almaty*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### Day 3

On the fourth day of your Asian adventures, you will head to Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan border and after passing the customs the trip will proceed to Bishkek – the country's capital. That will be a nice 3-hour trip passing by beautiful natural areas. Kyrgyzstan is a land of unspoiled mountain capes, beautiful pastures, friendly shepherds and exotic Asian food. After your arrival in Bishkek, you will have a check-in and some time for a rest. The further tour program includes visits to the local bazaar, Panfilov Park, Ala-Too Square and monuments to national heroes. Panfilov Park is a cozy area with clean air, singing birds, beautiful fir trees and benches for a rest. (235 km)

*Overnight: Hotel in Bishkek*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### Day 4

This day you will leave Bishkek to visit the gem of Kyrgyz nature – Issyk Kul Lake. It is the seventh deepest lake in the world and the second-largest saline lake after the Caspian Sea. Before reaching Issyk Kul you will make a stop to visit Burana Tower which is an important archaeological site of the country. This tower is the only remaining structure of the ancient Balasagun city which is the 9th century capital of the Karakhanid



Empire. In this area, you will also enjoy lunch at the local Kyrgyz family. On the lake shores, you will admire the inspiring views of mountain peaks, unspoiled nature, surrounding woods. (230 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Issyk Kul*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 5**

In the morning you will head to Grigorevka Gorge - the largest and most famous one on the northern coast of Issyk-Kul, located on the Kungey Ala-Too mountain range. It is located about 30 km from Cholpon-Ata city, on the road from Bishkek. It is a land of gently sloping valleys and dense fir forests. You will spend several hours in this area enjoying the beauty and tranquility of the surrounding nature. In the afternoon, you will return to Bishkek to have a rest. (250 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Bishkek*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 6**

In the morning after breakfast, you will head to Ala Archa Gorge located at a distance of 45 km from Bishkek. The gorge lies within the national park on a spur of the Tien Shan mountain range. It is a wonderful place for hiking, enjoying fresh crystal air, fabulous scenery, and tranquility. Afterward, you will return to Bishkek and will have free time for shopping. After lunchtime, it prepares to have a flight to Tashkent – the capital of Uzbekistan. The country will be especially attractive for those interested in culture and history – Uzbekistan is full of unique architectural masterpieces lying within the Great Silk Road as well as exotic national cuisine and unique cultural traditions. (633 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Tashkent*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 7**

This day you will have a sightseeing tour around Tashkent. Your experienced guide will reveal lots of interesting facts and secrets for you. The program will include such monuments as Khast Imam Complex (where is kept the world's oldest Koran), Chorsu bazaar and Madrasah Kukeldash the largest madrasa (educational institution) of the 16 century. After lunchtime, your tour will proceed to the modern part of the city. Here is located the favorite central site of the city the Independence Square known for beautiful fountains and framed by important government buildings and administrative institutions such as the Uzbek Parliament Supreme Chamber, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and others. The sightseeing tour will end with an excursion in the Museum of Applied Art of Uzbekistan where over 7,000 samples of applied arts like handmade embroidery, skull-caps, jewelry, carpets and other Uzbek art are exhibited.

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Tashkent*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 8**

The day will be devoted to the exploration of one of the most important historical and cultural cities of Uzbekistan – Samarkand. The trip will take 2 hours by fast train (Afrosiyob). You will have some time for a rest at the hotel and then the tour will start. You will get to know that the city was founded in the VII century BC and after that it witnessed many historical events and shakes. First, you will visit Registan Square where the architectural ensemble of three madrasahs (Islamic schools) - the Ulugh Beg Madrasah, the Tilya-Kori Madrasah, and the Sher-Dor Madrasah is located. The tour will proceed to the mausoleum of Gur-e-Amir with the tomb of Tamerlane the Conqueror. The last historical sights to visit will be Shaki Zinda Necropolis



and Bibi-Khanym Mosque. To plunge into the local culture and try many exotic national products we recommend visiting Samarkand central bazaar. Be sure to try the famous local national bread – non. (307 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Samarkand*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 9**

After breakfast, there will be a trip to one of the most important towns in Tajikistan – Panjakent. This old city has a history that extends over 5,500 years. There were times when Panjakent was one of the most important cultural and craft centers of the country. It was even called the "Central Asian Pompeii." Now only ruins of its splendor have remained. With the help of your guide you will discover all its secrets and admire the remains of different constructions and the masterpieces of the early Middle Age. The overnight will be arranged in Panjakent. (60 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Panjakent*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 10**

After exploring the cultural and historical heritage of Tajikistan in Panjakent you will start discovering its natural gems. The first in the must-visit list is the cascade of Seven Lakes located at the distance of 60 km south of Panjakent. After reaching this fantastic area you will have hiking along the gorge to reach the first lake each of which is located on different altitudes. Here you will spend some time enjoying the stunning nature and tranquility. Then you will return to Samarkand (90 km) through the Jartepo border. Enjoy some free time in Samarkand, have a rest and get ready for the further exploration of this unique city. For the rest of the day, you will continue with the sightseeing tour and will visit Paper Mills Factory, Afrasiyob Museum and Ulugbek's observatory, which is the biggest one in the East.

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Samarkand*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 11**

The exploration of the historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan is continuing and this day you will have an exploration of Bukhara - the town located within the Great Silk Road. The town was founded about 2000 years ago and became the capital of the great state of the Samanids. It has an unprecedented number of mosques, the tombs of many Islamic saints, the significant religious places and architectural masterpieces. Walking along its narrow streets you will feel as going back to ancient times. The historical centre of the town is under the protection of UNESCO. This day you won't have much sightseeing – the only visitors will be to Chor Minor memorial and then have a rest in your hotel after the trip. (280 km, 4 hours)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Bukhara*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 12**

The day will be devoted to the exploration of the most important historical and cultural sights of Bukhara. Your city tour program will include the following sights: Samanid's dynasty mausoleum, Chashma Ayub Mausoleum, Bolo Haouz Mosque, the Ark Fortress, Kalon Complex, Magoki Attori Mosque, Ulugbek, and Abdulazizi Khan Madrasahs and Lyabi-Khauz Ensemble. The day will end with a pleasant dinner and folk show – program in old Nodir Devon Begi Madrassah. It was built in the 17th cent. in the historical centre of Bukhara. Each day in the yard of the madrasah there is a show program including national dances and the performance of folk music ensembles. The visitors will also have a chance to try national dishes here.

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Bukhara*



*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Day 13**

The day will start with the second part of your sightseeing tour around Bukhara. You will visit the summer palace of Emir Said Mir Mohammed Alim Khan and the museum of Decorative Applied Art. After lunchtime, you will be transferred to the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border for passing the customs and tour continuation. You will head to Mary city (240 km) through Farab (121 km) and Turkmenabat (32 km) (4-5 hours driving). On the way, you will cross the world-known Karakum Desert which the hottest one in Central Asia. Its name is translated as «the black sand» which is explained by the dark soil lying beneath the sand.

*Overnight: Hotel in Mary*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### **Day 14**

The day will start with a trip to ancient Marv city (40 km from Mary) preserved in ruins. The city is attractive due to its long-lasting history extending over 4000 years. There were times when Marv was the capital of powerful empires. Nowadays it is protected by UNESCO. With the help of our professional guides, you will have a deep immersion into the historical heritage of Marv and will visit the following sights: Gyz Gala and Oglan Gala, Complex of Askhabs, Gyaur Gala, Erk Gala, Soltan Gala, Soltan Sanjar Mausoleum, Ibn Zeid Mausoleum. After lunchtime, you will return to Mary and will have a walking tour in the central part of the city. The tour will include visits to the local United Museum of History, Ethnography, Flora and Fauna of Mary and Orthodox Church built by Russians at the end of XIX century, the Regional Mosque, the Central Theater, the Convention and Conference Center “Ruhiet Koshgi”, the Central Park and the Monument of Mollanepes. After the end of the tour, you'll have a flight to Ashgabat city. (373 km)

*Overnight: Hotel in Ashgabat*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### **Day 15**

After breakfast, your sightseeing tour around Ashgabat will start. This city is the capital of Turkmenistan, its administrative, political, industrial, scientific and cultural centre. It's attractive due to the abundance of pure white marble buildings which gives a specific charm to the city. No wonder that this «city of white marble» was included in the Guinness World Records book. First, you will see the beautiful fountain complex of Oguz Han & Sons and then the main Turkmenian Mosque. After a while, you will have a short trip to Nissa historical complex. It consists of two archeological monuments - Old and New Nissa. Next, you'll return to Ashgabat and see the famous monument of the capital the Monument to the Turkmenistan Constitution founded to mark the 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence. After the lunch break and some time for a rest, you will get acquainted with the cultural peculiarities of the country. In the National Carpet Museum see the unique examples of national carpets and in Gulistan Bazaar try local products and meet friendly locals.

*Overnight: Hotel in Ashgabat*

*Meals: Breakfast*

### **Day 16**

There is a stunning natural phenomenon in Turkmenistan that attracts lots of travelers and arises many questions. That is Darvaza burning gas crater located in the middle of the desert. You will visit this site in the morning and admire the unique scene of a circular large crater with burning gas that never goes out. The sight of a flame burning among the yellow sands of the desert fascinates and intrigues even experienced travellers.



The crater has been burning since 1971. You will learn the interesting version of the crater appearance from your guide. You will stay in camps for overnight. (275 km)

**Overnight:** *Tents*

**Meals:** *Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Day 17**

In the morning you will leave the camping area and head to Koneurgench city (260 km, 4 hours). It is an architectural reserve which once was the capital of Khorezm ancient region and state. In 2005 all the historical monuments of the city were included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. You will explore such sights as Turabek Hanum Mausoleum, Kutlug Timur Minaret, Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum, Academy of Horezm, Il Arslan Mausoleum, Mamun Minaret, Mausoleums of Najm Ed Din & Soltan Ali. At the end of the tour, you will be transferred to the Uzbekistan border and proceed to Khiva (165 km, 2 hours 30 min) historical city.

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Khiva*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 18**

This is the last day of your Asian adventures. You will spend it by exploring the heritage of Khiva town - the most peculiar Uzbek city, the history of which is connected with the Great Silk Road. Khiva is a museum city preserving a number of the best examples of the Islamic architecture of Central Asia. Here you will visit the main sight Itchan Kala town which once served as the resting-place for caravans. You will stroll around its unique streets and feel like in ancient times. Itchan Kala was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1990. Your city tour program will also include the madrasah of Muhammad Amin-khan, Kelta Minar, Kunya Ark, madrasah of Muhammad Rakhimkhan, Pakhlavan Mahmud Mausoleum, Islam Khodja Minaret and Madrasah, Djuma Mosque and Minaret, and Tash Hovli Palace. The day will end with a flight to Tashkent. (996 km)

**Overnight:** *Hotel in Tashkent*

**Meals:** *Breakfast*

### **Day 19**

Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the International Airport, departure.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*



## **Booking terms**

### **Booking process**

Once you have chosen the tour and travel date, push Book now button at your chosen date, fill necessary fields and send us an inquiry. Alternatively use contact from from contact us page in About us menu tab. Once we have received your inquiry, confirmed all tour details with you, we send deposit invoice. After the deposit is received (500 euro per person), we start your hotel, train, air tickets reservations and send your Tour Voucher with all the trip details.

### **Payment process**

Tour payment is divided into 2 parts: 1. Deposit, 2. Final payment.

1. Deposit amount is 500 euro per person. Once you prepaid the deposit, it is fully refundable for a month. After month deposit becomes nonrefundable. Deposit is paid via bank transfer, your tour manager provides deposit payment invoice with full bank details. We need deposit to start your hotel, guide, vehicle, domestic flights and train ticket booking.

2. Final payment is done via bank transfer (15 working days prior to tour start) or cash (upon arrival before tour start). Both cases your tour manager provides you electronic or paper invoice. We reserve the right to cancel your tour and apply the relevant cancellation charges (detailed below) if we do not receive all payments at the due time.

### **Tour Cancellation**

If you or your group member cancels the tour, please make sure to let us know in a month after deposit is paid. Note, the deposit is non-refundable, however, you can use it throughout the year and book another tour. In this case, train and domestic flight ticket fees only will be charged a cancellation fee.

### **Rights and obligations**

Tours provided by our company are planned for many months before its inception and are not the subject of change or cancellation. Under the obligation of forced circumstances (weather, holidays) we can make some changes to the itinerary, however, all that relates to services and attractions will remain unchanged. Please note that our tours require a minimum number of participants –2 persons. We reserve the right to cancel the trip with full refund or deposit paid, if the tour booked by you do not have the minimum number of participants. We inform you about the cancellation of the tour no later than 30 days before the start. We also request immediately and promptly report all complaints and any claims during the tour. If possible, all problems will be solved. If the tourist does not report any complaint, the compensation will not be implemented.

Note AraraTour Central Asia is not liable for services not included in the tour price. Our responsibility is limited only to the extent provided by our tour. Force majeure or any other event which is beyond our control and which is not preventable by reasonable diligence on our part frees both parties from liability or obligation. In case of Force majeure, we don't issue any refund.

### **Insolvency or bankruptcy insurance**

AraraTour Central Asia guarantees the refund of clients' money for unfulfilled services even in the case of company's own insolvency or bankruptcy.