

Central Asia Classic Group Tour

Duration: 11 days

You will visit: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Fri Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

Arrive in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Pick-up from the airport and transfer to the hotel, where check-in begins at noon. Your first city tour of Central Asia Classic Group Tour starts at hotel, guide and driver will pick you up and begin your Tashkent city tour. First visit the Museum of Applied Arts, an informative collection of Uzbekistan's finest handicrafts housed in an ornately decorated villa. Take a ride on the Tashkent Metro. Each station is decorated with ceramic tiles and murals depicting a unique theme. Walk through Amir Timur Square and Independence Square. Excursion to the Old City, including the architectural complex Hast-Imam (15th century), which holds the oldest known Quran in the world. Explore Chorsu Bazaar, one of the oldest markets in Central Asia, where you can sample or buy sweets, fruits and souvenirs. Duration of sightseeing: 6 hours. Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: none.

Day 2: Sat Tashkent – Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

In the morning the driver will transfer you to the railway station for a train journey to Samarkand city – The Silk Road jewelry. You will have Samarkand city tour with guide, visit Gur Emir Mausoleum, the final resting place of Timur, and the impressive Registan Square, with its three Madrasahs dating back to the 15th to 17th centuries. Take in the beauty of Bibi Khanum Mosque and stroll through the multi-level complex of Siab Bazaar, where you can find souvenirs and sample local sweets, fruits, and the famous Samarkand bread. Explore the impressive Shakhi-Zinda, a 15th-century burial complex, and walk the imposing pathway to see its blue-domed tombs. End the day with a visit to the Ulugbek Observatory, where you can view the remains of a 14th-15th-century sextant and tour the Ulugbek Museum. Duration of sightseeing: 6 hours. Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: breakfast.

Day 3: Sun Samarkand – border – Seven Lakes - Penjikent (Uzbekistan/Tajikistan)

Begin your day with a delicious breakfast at the hotel before transferring to the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border crossing at Jartepa (50km). After passing through customs and passport control, your local Tajik guide and driver will be waiting for you on the Tajikistan side to take you to the breathtaking Seven Lakes (90km). Located in the Fann Mountains, each of the Seven Lakes boasts its own unique color, ranging from turquoise to purple. Take in the natural beauty of this special place and enjoy lunch at a guesthouse. Continue your journey to the charming city of Penjikent (70km), where you'll spend the night at a hotel.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 4: Mon Penjikent – border – Samarkand (Tajikistan/Uzbekistan)

Have breakfast and start a tour of ancient Penjikent, the ruins of a town founded by the Sogdians in the 5th century. In old Penjikent you'll get to see the foundations of houses, a citadel with Zoroastrian fire temples, the remains of the city bazaar and other excavated ruins in the old city. In the newer part of Penjikent, visit a local bazaar, mosque, and the Rudaki Museum. Drive to the Jartepa border crossing (30 min) via Sarazm, a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in the 4th century BC. After crossing the border, you'll continue your Central Asia Classic Group Tour in Uzbekistan, your driver meet you at the border to take you to your hotel in Samarkand. Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: breakfast, lunch.

Accommodation: camping in tent.

Day 5: Tue Samarkand – Gijduvan – Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

After breakfast continue your Central Asia Classic Group Tour with a drive from Samarkand to Bukhara via Gijduvan (280km). Stop on the way at the Rabati Malik Caravanserai (11th century) and Sardoba. Visit Gijduvan, a small town whose traditional crafts and ceramics have been sought after in Central Asia for centuries due to their quality and colorful, decorative style. Visit the ceramic center and pottery master-class, before having lunch. Visit the Emir's Summer Residence at Sitorai Mokhi-Khosa (19th century) near Bukhara. This is a unique site combining Oriental and Russian architecture. (No English-speaking guide provided here). Check-in to the hotel in Bukhara. Free time in UNESCO World Heritage sites. In the evening, there is a national show with dinner. Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 6: Wed Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

Begin the morning with a city walking tour led by your local guide. Your private tour will include the Lyabi-Hauz Ensemble, Magoki-Attori Mosque and the Trade Domes (15-16th centuries) with workshop of masters. Continue your excursion to Poi Kalyan Ensemble, including the Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque and Miri-Arab Madrasah. Visit Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan Madrasahs. Discover the Ark Fortress and museum in Bukhara. Next site is the Bolo-Khauz Mosque with a pond. Last site is the mausoleum of Ismail Samanid. Duration of sightseeing: 6 hours. Overnight in the Bukhara hotel.

Meals: breakfast.

Day 7: Thu Bukhara – Khiva (Uzbekistan)

In the morning depart Bukhara and drive to Khiva (480 km, 7 h). Today we will have an overland transfer from Bukhara to Khiva through the Kyzylkum desert. Caravans on the Great Silk Road carrying porcelain and spices used the same route for hundreds of years. Arrival in Khiva, the "museum under the open sky" late in the afternoon. After check-in, free time to discover Khiva, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overnight in a hotel.

Meals: breakfast.

Day 8: Fri Khiva (Uzbekistan)

After breakfast at the hotel, take a walking tour around Itchan-Kala with a local guide in your Central Asia Classic Group Tour. Start with Kunya-Ark Khan's castle and the inner citadel of Ichan Kala, before continuing to the following sites, Kalta Minor Tower, the tallest minaret in Central Asia. Muhammad Amin-Khan, the biggest medieval madrasah in Khiva and Mukhammad Rahimkhan Madrasah. Juma Mosque, with 212 wooden

columns and a minaret 32.5 m high, next Tash-Hauli with its high battlements, towers and fortified gates. Necropolis of Pahlavan Mahmud, the cultic center of Ichan Kala, residence of Islam Khodja, vizier of the last khan. Duration of sightseeing: 6 hours. Overnight at the hotel in Khiva.

Meals: breakfast.

Day 9: Sat Khiva – border – Kunya Urgench - Darvaza (Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan)

After your morning breakfast, you'll travel with your driver to the Turkmenistan border point (60km). You'll have to pass through customs, and transportation may not be available in the transit zone. Once you pass border control, your Turkmenistan guide will meet you, and together you'll embark on a 100km drive to Kunya-Urgench. Short sightseeing in Kunya-Urgench, you'll visit the Tyurabek-Khanym and Sayit Ahmed Mausoleums, Kutlug Timur Minaret, Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum of Khorezmshakh, and Kyrk Molla Hill. You'll enjoy a picnic lunch while exploring the area.

In the afternoon, you'll take drive to the Darvaza Gas Crater (4-5h), located in the middle of the Karakum Desert. Enjoy the magnificent ring of fire by night. A delicious fire-cooked meal will be served for dinner near the burning gas crater, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Meals: breakfast, picnic-lunch, camp style BBQ dinner.

Day 10: Sun Darvaza – Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Begin your day by witnessing the stunning desert sunrise before indulging in a camp-style breakfast. Afterward, you'll visit the mud crater before embarking on a scenic drive to Ashgabat, which spans 280 kilometers and takes approximately four hours to complete. Along the way, you'll have the opportunity to take photos of the majestic sand dunes and graceful camels.

Upon arrival in Ashgabat, check-in to hotel and start a sightseeing tour of the capital city, which has been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records for having more white marble buildings than any other city in the world. You'll visit the Old Nissa archaeological site, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Spiritual Mosque, which is one of the largest mosques in Central Asia. Other notable stops include the National Museum of History, the Monument of Neutrality, Presidential Square, Ertugrul Gazi Mosque, and the recently built Independence Park. A delicious dinner will be served, overnight in Ashgabat, your last night of Central Asia Classic Group Tour.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 11: Mon Ashgabat – departure (Turkmenistan)

Free morning before check-out by noon. Transfer to Ashgabat International Airport for your departure flight. End of the Central Asia Classic Group Tour.

Meals: breakfast.

Inclusions:

- Accommodation based on double/twin room sharing, with breakfast, 9 nights;
- Trekking tent or shared Yurt in Darvaza crater, 1 night;
- All road transfers including airport and train station (2 persons in sedan, 3-8 persons in minivan);
- Local English-speaking escort guide on days 3-4 and 9-10;
- Local English-speaking guide for the city tours in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva;
- Entrance fees to sights as per itinerary;
- Gijduvan pottery master class and lunch;
- National folk-show and dinner in Bukhara;
- Economy-class tickets for Tashkent-Samarkand train;
- Meals as designated in the program;
- 1L bottle of water per person per day;
- Transfers SUV/4WD in Darvaza;
- Visa support letter for Turkmenistan tourist visa.

Exclusions:

- Tour leader to accompany the group for the whole duration of the tour;
- Meals not indicated in the program;
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Personal travel insurance;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- All visas, e-visas and visa support letters to Central Asia countries;
- Tips are not included (driver, guide, porter);
- All other charges and services not mentioned under "Inclusions".