

Marble City and Desert Tour

Duration: 4 days

You will visit: Ashgabat, Darvaza, Kunya Urgench.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Ashgabat – arrival

Arrive in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. A driver will meet you at the airport to bring you to your hotel, where check-in begins at noon. Free time to relax at the hotel and enjoy its amenities.

Overnight in Ashgabat hotel.

Day 2: Ashgabat

Tour Ashgabat with your private local guide and driver. Meet at the hotel for sightseeing in Ashgabat to the following sites:

- Old Nisa, a spectacular archaeological site just 15 km from the city. Nisa was the capital of the Parthian Empire, founded in the 3rd century BC and remaining in power for nearly 500 years. Today it's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia. Also referred to as the Spiritual Mosque and the Gypjak Mosque, it includes a mausoleum with the tombs of former president Turkmenbashy and his immediate family members.
- Arch of Neutrality, a 95-meter-high tower topped with a gold statue of former president Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashy) that rotates to face the sun. Ride to the top in a funicular to tour a small museum and enjoy a panoramic view of the city.
- Independence Park, including the yurt-shaped Independence Monument housing the Museum of National Values. The museum is surrounded by lavish fountains, 27 statues of Turkmenistan's key historical figures and a golden sculpture of Niyazov himself.
- Statue of Lenin, unique in that it stands on a large base ornately decorated in traditional Turkmen ornamentation.
- National Museum of History, displaying over half a million items from every region of the country, including rare and priceless artifacts from ancient times through the Middle Ages.
- Gulistan Bazaar (also known as the Russian Bazaar), one of the oldest markets in the city, a clean yet lively place to buy snacks and mingle with local shoppers.

Today's excursion also includes a trip to the Akhalteke horse stables, (app. 1 hour from Ashgabat), where you'll learn about the care and training of these pure-bred Turkmen horses, known for their incredible speed, agility and sleek beauty.

Overnight in Ashgabat hotel.

Tour duration: 5-6 hours

Day 3: Ashgabat – Darvaza Gas Crater

Free time in the morning, followed by an afternoon drive to Darvaza Gas Crater (280 km, 4 hrs), also known as the Door to Hell.

Stop en route for a visit to Damla Village, a remote settlement in the Karakum Desert. Enjoy the drive through the desert, stopping along the way to take photos of sand dunes and camels.

Arrive to Darvaza Gas Crater by evening to enjoy a spectacular sunset view before admiring the crater's flames accentuated by a pitch-black sky. The fire crater is about 80m in diameter and 30m deep, and staring into this 'Door to Hell' with your own eyes is an experience like no other. Set up camp and enjoy a meal cooked over the fire as you lounge near the burning crater. Overnight in tents or a yurt.

Day 4: Darvaza Gas Crater – Kunya-Urgench – Uzbekistan Border Crossing (Khodjeyli – Kunya-Urgench)

Wake up early to see the sunrise and enjoy a camp-style breakfast before continuing your journey. Before leaving the desert, you'll stop to visit a nearby mud crater with a low, bubbling liquid at the bottom and a water crater filled with glossy turquoise water.

Depart for Kunya-Urgench, the ancient capital of the Khorezmshahs (270 km, 4 hrs). Your tour will include:

- Visit to the Tyurabek-Khanym Mausoleum (14th century), burial site of a Mongolian princess, and the Sayid Ahmed Mausoleum (14th century), tomb of a leader of the Golden Horde.
- Discovery of the Kutlug Timur Minaret (11th-13th centuries), which at 62 meters is the tallest minaret in Central Asia.
- Travel to the 12th-century Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum of Khorezmshakh.
- Exploration of Kyrk Molla Hill (Forty Mullahs Hill), a fortress covering three hectares that includes the famous Mamun Library (8th-9th centuries) and an ancient cemetery believed to hold present-day healing powers.
- Walk through Fakhreddin Razi Mausoleum (a.k.a. mausoleum of Arslan II, 13th century), one of the oldest, most unique structures in all of Central Asia.
- Drive to the Mausoleum of Najmaddin Kubra (12th century), the founder of the Sufi order Kubrawiya, and a favorite pilgrimage site for visiting Muslims.
- Walk through the Sultan Ali Mausoleum (16th century), a half-completed structure intended for a powerful Turkmen ruler but left unfinished due to ongoing war.

Drive to the Uzbekistan border and pass through customs on both sides. End of Marble City and Desert Tour.

Inclusions:

- Accommodation based on double/twin room in a hotel, with breakfast (2 nights);
- Accommodation in a yurt or tent at Darvaza, shared room, with dinner and breakfast (1 night);

- Utensils and necessary equipment for camping at Darvaza (sleeping bags, sleeping mats, pillows, dining table, chairs);
- Transportation – all transfers, airport pick-up and drop-off to border (1-2 people in sedan, 3-8 in minivan, 4WD Darvaza);
- Private, local English-speaking escort guide;
- Entrance fees to the sights as per itinerary;
- Visa support letter for Turkmenistan tourist visa;
- 1L bottle of water per person per day.

Exclusions:

- Consular fees for Turkmenistan tourist visa and migration tax;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- Tips are not included (driver, guide, porter);
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Full board (lunches and dinners);
- Travel insurance;
- All other charges and services not mentioned under “Inclusions”.