

Turkmenistan Transit Tour - Uzbekistan to Iran

Duration: 4 days

You will visit: Merv, Mary, Ashgabat, Darvaza Gas Crater.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Bukhara – border – Merv - Mary

After passing through customs, your Turkmenistan guide will meet you to continue the journey to Merv (300 km, 4-5 hours). Merv is an ancient city that was a major center of international trade and crafts on the Silk Road. Your guided sightseeing tour of Merv will include:

- Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum (12th century) – considered by many to be the most majestic architectural monument of Merv, this mausoleum amazes with its thick walls, symmetrical proportions and a domed top that displays amazing architectural craftsmanship for its day;
- Greater Kyz Kala and Lesser Kyz Kala (8th-9th centuries) - These unique fortified homes are built of mud brick, with no known archaeological equivalents;
- Erk Kala (6th century BC), the seat of ancient Merv and its oldest settlement, whose remaining walls are nearly 30 meters high. Climb the walls for a great view of the surrounding area;
- Gyaur Kala (3rd century BC) - Merv's second oldest settlement, famous for its thick, 2-km long walls;

After the tour, transfer to Mary for an overnight stay at the hotel.

Day 2: Mary - Ashgabat

In the morning transfer to Mary Airport to take a flight to Ashgabat. Upon arrival in Ashgabat, transfer to the hotel, and check-in at noon. Tour Ashgabat with your private local guide and driver. Begin your sightseeing adventure in the capital by meeting at your hotel:

- Old Nisa, a spectacular archaeological site just 15km 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 - one of the largest mosques in Central Asia. Also referred to as the Spiritual Mosque and the Gypjak Mosque, it includes a mausoleum with the tombs of former president Turkmenbashi and his immediate family members;
- Neutrality Monument, a 95-meter-high tower topped with a gold statue of former president Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) 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 decorated in traditional Turkmen ornamentation.

After your tour, transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Ashgabat.

Day 3: Ashgabat - Darvaza - Ashgabat

After free time in the morning, your driver and guide will pick you up from your Ashgabat hotel and drive to Darvaza Gas Crater (280km, 4-5 hrs). The drive to Darvaza is filled with fun breaks along the way: Stop to take photos of dunes and camels along the way. Marvel at the mud and water craters, smaller and tamer versions of the Gate to Hell. Cross the final dunes to reach Darvaza Gas Crater, arriving at the crater in the evening to enjoy a spectacular sunset view before admiring the crater's flames accentuated by a pitch-black sky. The fire crater is about 80 meters in diameter and 30 meters deep, and staring into this 'Door to Hell' with your own eyes is an experience like no other. Enjoy a delicious campfire dinner as you lounge near the burning crater. Drive back to Ashgabat after dinner for drop-off at the hotel.

Day 4: Ashgabat – border with Iran (Gaudan/Bajgiran)

After breakfast, check-out from the hotel and transfer to the border Gaudan / Bajgiran (50km, 1h). Go through border formalities at both checkpoints Turkmenistan and Iran. End of Turkmenistan transit tour.

Inclusions:

- Accommodation based on double/twin room sharing, with breakfast, 3 nights;
- All road transfers (1-2 persons in sedan, 3-8 persons in minivan, 4WD in Darvaza);
- Economy class flight tickets from Mary-Ashgabat;
- Private, local English-speaking escort guide;
- Entrance fees to 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 (3 lunches and 2 dinners);
- Travel insurance;
- All other charges and services not mentioned under "Inclusions".