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# The Five Stans of the Silk Road Trip Notes

**Ways to Travel:** Guided Group

**Destinations:** Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan

**Programmes:** Culture

Trip Code:

**AXK**



**23 Days** Flight Inclusive

**23 Days** Land only

**Min age:** 16

## Trip Overview

Vast deserts, rolling steppe, fertile valleys and majestic mountains form the backdrop to the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia which are commonly known as the five Stans. Amongst this changing and varied landscape are traditional villages, ancient towns and modern cities which tell a tale of advancing Greek and Persian armies, marauding Mongolian hordes, traders selling their wares along the Silk Road, philosophers, astronomers, Communist experiments and post-Soviet eccentrics. Journey past giant burning gas pits, intrinsically tiled mosques, alpine lakes bordered by yurt camps, grand monuments, rural villages and colourful markets on this epic trip through the heart of Central Asia.

## At a Glance

- 23 days land only / flight inclusive
- Travel by minibus
- 15 nights hotels, 3 nights home stays, 2 nights yurts, 1 night cottage and 1 night guest house
- All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 8 dinners included
- Single supplement available
- Countries visited: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan

## Trip Highlights

- 'Door to Hell' giant burning gas pit in Turkmenistan
- Islamic architecture and ruins along the great Silk Road
- Villages and lakes of the Fann and Tien Shan Mountains
- Post Soviet grand monuments
- History of traders, preachers and invaders

## Is This Trip for You?

This trip covers a lot of distance in three weeks and there are a number of places where we only spend one night (especially during the section through Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan). Most drives tend to be 4-5 hrs with the odd drive taking 6hrs and there is a particularly long day from Samarkand to Termez which involves around 8hrs driving, though this is broken up with a stop at Shakhrisabz.

The countries visited don't necessarily have a great infrastructure and you shouldn't expect the same comforts you would get at home. Most nights are in standard hotels, though we do also stay in homestays, yurt camps and a guest house which will be more basic. Hot water is normally available but may not always be reliable; toilets might be squat toilets and toilets and/or showers may be outside the main building on some of the more basic nights. Some nights you may end up having to share a room with more than one other person and whilst every effort is made to ensure that on such nights men and women who are not travelling together don't have to share a room this cannot be guaranteed. On these nights single supplements do not apply. We stay in these places, however, as there are very limited options in some of the areas we visit.

Whilst this is not an active trip, the pace and distance covered can be tiring. There are also some occasions where we go on hikes, in particular in Kyrgyzstan. These hikes are not challenging and can vary depending on the preferences and abilities of the group, however.

Over a relatively short period, three weeks, this trip takes in a vast array of sites both cultural and natural and covers five fascinating countries which once shared a common history but which now are each developing in their own way.

Please note that smoking in public is illegal in Turkmenistan (though smoking in private is fine resulting with the situation where more people smoke indoors than outdoors) and you should not smoke outside the airport on arrival or in the street in Ashgabat. Also, you can only bring 2 packs of cigarettes into Turkmenistan.

When visiting mosques and other religious buildings women should wear long skirts and have their shoulders covered, it is also advisable to bring a scarf and cover your head on such occasions. Knee-length skirts/dresses and shorts, as well as sleeveless tops, are fine in other circumstances.

Given the bureaucracy in the region, particularly in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, we may be forced to change the route or activities due to government decisions which are beyond our control.

There will be a Western leader throughout, plus a different local leader in each country. Border crossings can be chaotic and will require patience. In some cases, you will need to walk through a neutral zone between the two countries' immigration posts with your luggage. The Turkmenistan - Uzbekistan (Farab border) is the most complex and involves walking 2-2.5km; sometimes cars are available to drive us but this cannot be guaranteed.

Temperatures can vary from extremely hot to close to freezing on any given departure as we visit both deserts and high mountains.

Following a review of all our trips we have categorised this trip as generally not suitable for persons of reduced mobility. However if you are a regular traveller on such trips, please contact customer services to discuss the trip and your personal condition.

## Group

The group will generally be between 5 and 16 people. There will be a Western leader for the duration of the tour who will be supported by a different local leader in each of the countries visited. Due to the legal restrictions, each local leader will say farewell to you at the border post and you will meet the next local leader on the other side.

**Adult min age:** 16

**Min group size:** 5

**Max group size:** 16

## Itinerary

## Land Only Itinerary

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### Day 1

#### Start Ashgabat

Arrive at Ashgabat at any time. The group flights usually arrive very late at night (i.e. around 2am on day 2). Please note that it is obligatory by Turkmen law for tourists to have an arrival transfer arranged by the inviting party (as per your LOI/visa) from Ashgabat airport. For anyone not joining the group transfer, Exodus offers free arrival transfers for any flight, provided you have supplied your flight details in advance - please see the 'joining' section of the Trip Notes for more information.

**Hotel Ak Altyn or similar**

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### Day 2

#### Explore Ashgabat

Ashgabat holds the world record for the most white marble buildings in the world. In the post-Soviet era successive Turkmen leaders have invested in these impressive buildings as a show of the country's strength and grandeur and can make for quite a surreal experience. Ashgabat has been described as Pyongyang meets Las Vegas and you can see why. Following an initial briefing, we visit some of the city's greatest monuments, buildings and fountains including Ertogrul Gazy Mosque, Independence Park, the Neutrality Arch and the National Museum.

**Hotel Ak Altyn or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

## Day 3

### Nisa and Darvaza

Today is a long day trip out of the city. Our first stop, on the outskirts of Ashgabat, is the ancient Persian-era fortress of Nisa. A former capital of the Persian Parthian Empire which controlled much of the region from Iraq to Pakistan 2000 years ago, the ruins of Nisa were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.

We later head north in jeep convoy into the Karakum Desert some 260kms (4 hours drive) away to one of the world's more unusual sites, a massive burning gas crater in the middle of nowhere in the Darvaza region. In the 1970s Soviet engineers looking for natural gas deposits came across this area. Attempting to assess the amount of gas present they set up a drill. The drill collapsed, exposing a big crater and seeping methane gas into the air. The engineers decided to set the gas alight in the belief that it would burn off within a few weeks. Over 45 years later the crater is still burning. The sight of a big burning crater in the middle of the desert after the sun goes down is quite an experience and likely to be unlike anything else you've come across.

We have dinner near the crater before returning to Ashgabat after dark, arriving back at the hotel after midnight. If you do not want to travel this distance to see the incredible burning crater at Darvaza it is possible to stay behind in Ashgabat.

### Hotel Ak Altyn or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

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## Day 4

### To Mary

Leaving the Turkmen capital behind we start our journey east along one of the Silk Road routes of old. Our destination today is Mary, about 5hrs away (plus stops). A short distance outside Ashgabat we make our first stop at the 15th century Anau Mosque which is located on the edge of a Bronze-age site.

From here we continue to the remains of the Silk Road-era town of Abiverd. The settlement, which was completely abandoned for about three centuries, was once a vibrant and important centre. The 12th century city is about 130kms, two hours, from Ashgabat and makes for an interesting stop and an ideal opportunity to stretch our legs.

As we continue on the way to Mary look out for camels and small dusty desert towns.

Eventually reaching Mary we have a late afternoon/early evening city tour taking in the Central Bazaar, Juma Mosque and Russian Orthodox Church.

### Hotel Mary or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 5

### Merv and to Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Possibly the largest city in the world in its heyday, Merv was razed to the ground by Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hordes in 1221. It is believed 700,000 people lost their lives when the city was destroyed - It never recovered.

Today, this UNESCO site is Turkmenistan's most important historical site and we take the time to visit it before continuing to the border about 5.5hrs (245kms) away where we say goodbye to our Turkmen leader. We hope to arrive at the border around 4pm and then crossing the border from Turkmenistan into Uzbekistan can take about 1.5hrs. We meet our Uzbek leader on the other side and drive for approximately another 2 hours (100kms) to one of the great Silk Road cities, Bukhara.

### Hotel Kavsar or Similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 6

### Bukhara

2000 year old Bukhara has an old centre which evokes the many centuries of traders and travellers who've passed through here on their way between the Mediterranean and China. We spend the day exploring this fascinating Silk Road city including at its heart the historic Lyabi Khauz architectural complex with the oldest reflective pool in Central Asia. It is surrounded by medieval buildings including the Nadir Divan-Begi Madrasah and Khanaka with a façade of intricate mosaics. We also visit the Poi Kalyan Complex which includes the 48m high Kalyan Minaret which has come to symbolise the city, the Kalyan Mosque with 288 domes covering galleries below, Samanids Mausoleum, the Ark Citadel and Chor-Minor.

#### **Hotel Kavsar or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 7

### Bukhara to Samarkand

This morning we uncover more of Bukhara's fascinating history and culture as we explore the Sitorai-MohI-Hosa Palace, Bukhara's Emirs' Summer Palace. After lunch we have a 4-5hrs (300kms) drive to the other great Silk Road city, Samarkand. We break up the journey with a short stop at Rabat-i-Malik, a caravanserai ruin and lunch in Navoi.

#### **Kavsar Dilshoda / Malika Prime or similiar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 8

### Full day sightseeing in Samarkand

Possibly the most famous of the Silk Road cities, Samarkand's blue tiled buildings dazzle in the bright sun. Most impressive is one of the World's great squares - Registan Square, surrounded on three sides by the madrassahs of Ulugh Beg, Sher-Dor and Tilya-Kori. It is said that the square and its madrassah influenced other sites from the great square in Iran's Isfahan to the Taj Mahal in India. The city was the capital of the great Tamerlane and we spend the day visiting a number of Tamerlane era sites including the Gur-Emir Mausoleum, Ulugh Beg's observatory, the huge cathedral mosque Bibi Khanum, as well as the impressive Necropolis.

#### **Hotel Dilshoda / Malika Prime or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 9

### Shakhrisabz and Termez.

We start early for the long day ahead, combining driving (approx. 8 hours) with sightseeing.

The day starts with a 3hr transfer to the town of Shakhrisabz. Timurin (from the reign of Tamerlane) city boasts a number of important historic monuments including the ruins of the Ak Saray Palace, the Doruttilyavat Ensemble, the Kok Gumbaz Mosque and others mostly dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries. Sadly, the city's historic centre is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage in Danger.

After exploring Shakhrisabz's sites we continue south heading towards the Silk Road city of Termez, about 5hrs away. We arrive at Termez in the evening.

#### **Hotel Meredian Termez or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 10

### Termez city tour.

The region around Termez is unusual for the Stans in that it is home to Buddhist ancestry and relics as well as some more traditional Silk Road sites and interesting museums. We spend the day exploring this city often overlooked by visitors (due to its remote location) including the 1st century Fayaz-tepe Buddhism Complex and the 9th and 10th century Samanid Sultan Saodat Mausoleum. Out of town (about 40kms) is the oldest site in Uzbekistan, dating back to the 4th century BC: Kampyr-Tepe. We visit the ruins of this ancient settlement before returning to Termez in order to visit the historical museum.

### Hotel Meredian Termez or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 11

### Cross into Tajikistan; on to Dushanbe.

Another early start to head to country number three, Tajikistan. On the way we hope to visit the village of Jarkurgan, famed for its mediaeval minaret. Upon arrival at the Sarysiyo border we bid farewell to our Uzbek leader and upon crossing are greeted by our Tajik leader. The drive from Termez to Dushanbe is 205km on a good road and takes about 5 or 6 hours (depending on border crossing time) and we will stop for lunch en route.

Dushanbe's origins probably stretch back 3,000 years though the city grew under Soviet rule as the capital for the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, a part of the Uzbek USSR. Upon arrival in the Tajik capital we have a city tour taking in Independence Square, the Samany Monument (dedicated to the founder of the Tajik Government), Rudaki Ave. and a historical museum.

### Hilton Dushanbe or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 12

### Into the Fann Mountains and Iskanderkul Lake.

The Fann Mountains are one of two of Tajikistan's great ranges (along with the Pamirs) and have peaks towering up to 5,489m. Our destination is Iskanderkul Lake (named after Alexander the Great and is thought to be the final resting place of the conqueror's beloved horse, Bucephalus) situated at 2,200m. The scenery is stunning as we travel through a beautiful valley; the drive takes about 4-5hrs/125km - please note that for the last 25km or so the road conditions deteriorate.

This afternoon we explore the area around the lake including visiting Tajikistan's biggest waterfall, affectionately called 'Tajikistan Niagara' and is 40m high. The glacial lake itself is often claimed to be the jewel of the Fann Mountains and one of the most beautiful in the former Soviet Union.

Tonight we spend the night in a cottages with fantastic views overlooking Iskanderkul Lake. There are shared bathrooms and toilets (some indoor and some outdoor).

### Cottage

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

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## Day 13

### Istravashan and Khujand

Leaving the Fann Mountains behind we make our way into Tajikistan's industrial and agricultural heartland around the city of Khujand (about 4hrs drive). En route we visit the town of Istravashan founded by the Persian king Kier in the 6th century, where we visit the old city with its bazaar and the Kok-Gumbaz mosque and madrassah.

Whilst Khujand, today, is not the most attractive of cities it has a complex history. Believed to be one of the oldest in Central Asia it was, over the centuries, attacked by successive armies of Alexander the Great, Arab invaders and the marauding hordes of Genghis Khan as well as being an important stop along the Silk Road. There are still traces of the city's glory days and we take in a tour of the sites including the Sheikh Maslikhiddin Mausoleum, the Payshhambe bazaar and Urumkhodjaev family country estate, a copy of the Russian tsarist palace of Peterhof.

#### **Khujand Delux Hotel or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 14

### Fergahana Valley in Uzbekistan

We return to Uzbekistan via the border crossing at Andurkhan where we say goodbye to our Tajik crew and re-join the Uzbeks.

The total driving time to Ferghana town is about 5hrs from Khujand but we make a number of stops along the way. The first of these is at Kokand which was the capital of the 19th century Kokand Khanate. We visit the Khudoyar-Khan Palace (1871) home to a museum, the Norbuta-Biy Madrassah and the Modarikhon Mausoleum.

From here we continue on to the small village of Rishtan which is famous for potter dynasties and ceramics masters. We visit a local ceramics studio and witness a demonstration of the craft before having the opportunity to buy some of the iconic earthenware.

Our final stop is at Marghilan where we visit a local silk factory and learn about the material which has given its name to the greatest trade route in history.

Eventually we arrive in Ferghana town where we spend the night.

#### **Hotel Club 777 or similar**

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 15

### To Osh and Arslan Bob in Kyrgyzstan

A short drive gets us to our next border crossing and country number 4. After meeting our Kyrgyz leader we head into nearby Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second city and begin our exploration. The order in which we visit places is flexible but we'll visit Osh Bazaar (Central Asia's largest market), as well as the sacred Sulayman Mountain, a holy Muslim site (and burial place of the prophet Sulayman (Solomon)) and the central point on the Silk Road. The walk to the top of Sulayman Mountain is paved with some steps and can be tiring in the heat but the views over the city and valley below, small museum and 15th century church are worth the effort.

Later, this afternoon, we leave the city behind and head for Arslanbob Nature Reserve (about 3.5-4hrs away including stops), arriving in the evening. The village of Arslanbob is located in the mountains at around 1,600m (though the top and bottom of the village vary considerably in altitude) and is surrounded by an ancient walnut forest believed to be the largest in the world.

We spend the next two nights in a basic homestay with outside drop-toilets and outside showers (normally with hot water).

#### **Homestay**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 16

### Full day in Arslan Bob

After quite a few days of moving on every day and covering a lot of ground, today is for relaxing in the picturesque village of Arslan Bob surrounded by walnut forests. We take it easy and at around mid-morning we will go for a walk and picnic lunch in the surrounding countryside. The walk takes around 4 hours (including lunch and stops) and requires walking shoes/boots. The pace is leisurely but if anyone prefers not to walk, you are free to opt out.

#### Homestay

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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## Day 17

### Chychkn Gorge

Our journey today takes us through the central Tien Shan Mountains as we drive through picturesque canyons and gorges and around Toktogul Reservoir. The drive takes approximately 8-9 hours to cover the 350km (including lunch and rest/photo stops). Eventually we reach Chychkan Gorge with its fir and juniper trees. Here we spend the night in a simple guest house with en suite rooms on the banks of a rushing river.

#### Oson Guest House

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

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## Day 18

### Kyzyl Oi Village

This morning there's a chance to go for another short walk to a nearby gorge before continuing our crossing of Central Kyrgyzstan. In the late morning, we set off on the drive to the village of Kyzyl Oi (4.5/5 hours including lunch and rest/photo stops), which translates as 'Red Bowl' and is so named because of the red cliffs surrounding the village like a bowl and who's clay is used to construct its buildings. The mountains here are hues of red and brown and particularly attractive in the late afternoon and early morning sun. The village itself dates from before the Great October Soviet Socialist Revolution and has kept its distinctive Central Asia character. Whilst the valley opens out, the village itself is located in a narrow gorge on the banks of the powerful Kekmeren River.

Upon arrival there is some free time to explore the village and surrounding area or interact with the families in whose homestays we will spend the night. We will usually be spread across a few houses but we will all have dinner together in one of the houses.

#### Homestay

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

## Days 19-20

### To Son Kul Lake

Leaving the gorges behind we head towards the high pastures surrounding Son Kul Lake (approx. 4 hours drive, including some rough roads), arriving in time for lunch. Considered by many to be the Jewel in the Kyrgyz crown for natural beauty, this is a land of nomadic shepherds tending their flocks. Whilst today yurt camps have multiplied around the lake, the people who look after these camps still often tend their flocks and cattle dot the jailoo (high mountain pastures) cared for by men on horseback. The lake's name means 'the last lake' and sat at 3,016m it's easy to see how it got its name.

We have the whole of the next day to take in the beauty of the landscape. There is the option to go on a 2-2.5 hour walk to the nearby hills - the hills are quite steep and this may not be for everyone but those who make it to the top will find a few petroglyphs. After lunch, we visit one of the Kyrgyz shepherd families close to camp to learn about their lifestyle and perhaps taste some kumis (a natural drink made from fermented mare's milk) or similar. There is also the option to go horseriding (optional extra)

We experience a bit of the nomad life as we stay in a yurt camp. There are now western style toilets and a 'shower yurt' with proper showers and wash basins. There is hot water when the generator is running (usually morning and evening) but it is not wholly reliable.

### Yurt Camp

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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## Day 21

### Bishkek

Leaving the high mountains which characterise Kyrgyzstan behind we make our way to the Republic's capital city, Bishkek (about 7hrs drive), stopping for lunch en route. The former Soviet city is undergoing a transformation with cafes and trendy bars opening. Upon arrival we have a short tour for a couple of hours of some of the city's main sites around the main square, Alatau Square. We visit the Museum of History and have some time for souvenir shopping or relaxing. (please note that if the Museum of History is closed for renovation or any other reason, we may substitute it for the Fine Arts Museum).

### Asia Mountains Hotel or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 22

### Almaty, Kazakhstan

A mere 4-5hrs from the Kyrgyz capital city (depending on border crossing times) is Almaty, the former Kazakh capital city and the biggest city in the fifth country on our trip. We spend the morning driving to what is considered Central Asia's most European city and set off on a city tour after lunch. We take in the Panfilovs Park with the Piously-Voznesenskiy Orthodox Cathedral (1907) built without any nails; a memorial to victims of WWII, the Republic Square and the high mountain dam of Medeo on the outskirts of town.

### Hotel Kazzhol Almaty or similar

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## Day 23

### End Almaty

Those on the group flights will be taken to the airport in time for their flight. If you're continuing on to the Astana extension you will be taken to the airport in time for the internal flight to the Kazakh capital. For land only passengers, the tour ends after breakfast.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

## Extend Your Trip

### Astana Extension

Extend your adventure in Kazakhstan and explore it's relatively new capital city.

Rising out of the Central Asian steppe, Kazakhstan's glitzy capital city is unlike any other. Built from scratch by President Nazarbayev, and paid for by gas and oil money, the city is a surreal modernist dream. Skyscrapers vie for your attention and the bright coloured lights are reminiscent of a futuristic sci-fi movie.

The detailed itinerary can be found [here \(/au/kazakhstan-holidays/trip-extensions/astana-extension/xxk\)](/au/kazakhstan-holidays/trip-extensions/astana-extension/xxk).

Please ask your sales consultant for more details.

## Accommodation

### Hotel, Yurt, Cottage and Homestay

Most nights are in standard hotels, though we do also stay in local homestays, cottages, yurt camps, and a guest house which will be more basic. Hot water is normally available but may not always be reliable; toilets may be squat toilets at times and toilets and/or showers may be outside on some of the more basic nights.

At the homestays in Arslan Bob and Kyzyl Oi (days 15, 16 and 18) you may have to share with 3-4 people to a room. Similarly, for the two nights in the yurt camp at Son Kul (days 19 and 20), you may sometimes have to share with 3 people to a yurt. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that on such nights men and women who are not travelling together don't have to share a room, this cannot be guaranteed. We stay in these places, however, as there are very limited options in some of the areas we visit.

### Additional Accommodation

In Turkmenistan, hotels charge a daily tourist tax of around USD2 per person per day - this is included in the holiday price for the main tour so you needn't worry about it. However, if you book extra nights accommodation in Ashgabat before the tour, you will need to pay this directly to the hotel yourself. If you book pre-tour accommodation in Turkmenistan (and will be staying in the country for more than three days plus your arrival day), you will be required by law to register your passport with the State Service of Turkmenistan - our local partner will assist with this.

### Single Supplement

If you prefer to have your own room, a limited number of single supplements are available on a first come first serve basis on some nights of the tour only - please request this at the time of booking. Please note that a single supplement is not available at the homestays (3 nights) or the yurt camp (2 nights) and in these locations you may have to share with 3-4 people per room. Single supplements are also not available at the cottages by Iskanderkul Lake (1 night) which are on a twin-share basis.

*Where a single supplement is available, paying for a single only guarantees a room for single use. It does not always mean a twin or double room will be provided for sole occupancy.*

Single supplement from \$922.50 AUD

## Food & Transport

### Eating & Drinking

All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 8 dinners included

Common dishes in the region include shish-kebabs and *plov* (rice usually with mutton, onions, carrots, spices, raisins, peas) which you'll probably see plenty of. The kebabs can be from different meats including lamb and beef whilst plov is a rice-based dish (variants elsewhere are known as pilaf or pilau rice). Another main staple is bread, especially in Uzbekistan where it is freshly baked and sold everywhere, and in Turkmenistan flat round bread baked in clay ovens is known as *churek*. Other traditional dishes include *chorba*, a meat and vegetable soup; *manty*, steamed dumplings filled with lamb; *qu'urma*, a lamb dish; *ichlekli*, a meat and onion pie, and *gutap*, a pie filled with meat, potatoes, spinach and pumpkin. There are normally a couple of opportunities to try home-cooked meals. Tea is also plentiful, both black and green and is drunk with most meals as well as throughout the day.

Please note that vegetarian food choices may be rather limited. If you are strictly vegetarian or have any special dietary requirements please notify us well in advance. In this region, the availability of certain specialised products for restricted diets, e.g. gluten-free or dairy-free, is minimal or non-existent and we strongly recommend you bring such specialised dietary items from home.

Drinking water is included and will be provided in large containers for you to refill your bottle from - please bring a reusable bottle with you.

## Transportation

The transport used varies depending on group size and we change vehicle every country. We normally use local 'tourist class' minibuses/coaches. Larger groups may be split across two vehicles or in a larger bus in some countries.

Some of the drives are long but they are mostly on sealed roads with just a few sections on dirt roads, including heading into the desert to see the burning pit at the door to hell, Darvaza as well as heading to Sonkul Lake in Kyrgyzstan. We use SUV/4x4 vehicles for the journey to Darvaza as the last 10km to the crater is off-road.

If you decide to do the Astana extension you will travel by internal flight.

## Weather & Seasonality

### Weather Information

Covering a large area varying from the deserts of Turkmenistan to the mountains of Kyrgyzstan the climate can change a lot. The summers (July and August) can be very hot in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan but fairly pleasant in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, whilst the Spring and Autumn (May/June and September/October) can be cooler in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan but more pleasant in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. As we visit regions ranging from deserts to high mountains you can expect temperatures in the 30s as well as close to freezing on the same trip and need to be prepared for both eventualities. Winters are very cold and harsh and some areas are impassable (especially to Sonkul in Kyrgyzstan) for most of the year which is why the season for this trip is relatively short lasting only from June to September.

### Weather Charts

#### Bishkek



#### Samarkand



## Joining Instructions

### Travelling flight inclusive from London: 23 Days

The group flight from London is a day flight departing on Day 1 of the itinerary.

### Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of Turkish Airlines (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

### Travelling land only: 23 days starting in Ashgabat and ending in Almaty

Your trip normally starts at our accommodation in Ashgabat in the evening of Day 1 of the itinerary. Details of how to reach the start point are provided in the Final Joining Instructions - sent approximately two weeks before departure.

As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure. The usual, standard check-in baggage weight allowance is 20kg.

In the unlikely event of any of your luggage being misplaced or damaged, a Property Irregularity Report (PIR) must be filed with the appropriate airline if you subsequently wish to make a claim against the airline or on your travel insurance. This must be done at the airport where your baggage arrived, or should have arrived.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

## Transfers Details

Airport transfers are included for those on the group flights.

**Please Note:** It is obligatory by Turkmen law for the inviting party (as per your LOI or Turkmen visa) to organise an arrival transfer from Ashgabat airport for tourists. If you are not joining the group transfer you will therefore still need to pre-book an arrival transfer through Exodus.

### Free Transfers

Exodus offers FREE airport *arrival* transfers for any flight for this trip (free departure transfer are not available for any flight), for both Land Only and Flight Inclusive clients, so no matter which flight you choose to arrive on you will be met and transferred to your hotel. All those taking advantage of the free airport transfers must provide full flight details for both arrival and departure in advance; unless specified otherwise, the transfer will be to the Exodus start (or pre-tour) hotel; transfers to other hotels in the same city may attract an extra charge; transfers may be shared with other Exodus customers on the same flight, or on a flight with similar arrival times.

If you require an airport departure transfer and are not on the group flights, you will need to pre-book a private transfer.

**Location start:** Ashgabat

**Location end:** Almaty

## What to Take

### Essential Equipment

Please bring a photocopy or two of your passport with you as our local representative will collect your passport in order to complete the Turkmenistan registration process. Please also bring a printed copy of your Turkmenistan LOI with you, which you will need to hand over to the authorities to collect your visa on arrival in Turkmenistan.

Due to the amount of travelling and the number of border crossings, for your own convenience, we strongly recommend that you pack as light as possible and use luggage with wheels as you will have to take your own luggage through the border crossings, some of which involve walking through a neutral zone.

Light casual cotton clothing is recommended. Please remember that you will be expected to cover your legs and arms (to the elbow) during visits to mosques. Women should also cover their hair with a scarf when visiting holy sites. Whilst this is not a requirement it is expected.

Local men tend not to wear shorts but it is acceptable to wear shorts except when visiting a mosque or madrasas. Sandals are useful as they are cooler and are easier to take off when visiting mosques.

A set of thermal underwear (as a lightweight solution) and a fleece, hat and gloves are highly recommended for cold nights.

You will also need a travel towel and trainers or walking shoes/boots.

Please bring a reusable water bottle with you.

Please note that some medicines are banned in both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan unless you are carrying a doctor's prescription. These include medicines which contain tramadol, morphin, opiates, codeine or similar components often found in painkillers.

At the time of writing the standard weight limit for hold baggage on the recommended international carrier for this trip is 23kg. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage.

As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

### Water Included

Plastic bottles are a big issue in many countries where recycling isn't yet widely available; they often end up in landfill sites or get burnt, both processes are harmful to the environment and we would like to reduce our impact here. For your trip we provide an alternative to single-use plastic bottles in order to reduce the amount of plastic used. This means that safe drinking water will be available throughout so all you need to do is bring a bottle to re-fill along the way. Please add this to your packing list!

 Yard of Poi Kalyan oriental complex at sunset. View from the gate. Bukhara

## Practical Information

### Passport

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for UK passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

### Visa

#### Uzbekistan

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for at least 3 months beyond your entry date into Uzbekistan. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for UK passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Anyone travelling on a British Citizen, Australian, New Zealand, or Canadian passport can enter Uzbekistan as a visitor (for tourism or business purposes) for stays of up to 30 days without a visa. For a full list of nationalities that are eligible for a visa-free visit of up to 30-days, please visit [http://www.uzbekembassy.org/e/visa\\_to\\_uzbekistan/](http://www.uzbekembassy.org/e/visa_to_uzbekistan/) ([http://www.uzbekembassy.org/e/visa\\_to\\_uzbekistan/](http://www.uzbekembassy.org/e/visa_to_uzbekistan/)).

Many other nationalities are eligible for a simplified visa in advance (without the need for an authorisation letter of invitation), including USA. If you are eligible for a visa in advance then you should apply for one as for visas upon arrival, a letter of invitation is still required. Should you need an authorisation letter, please contact Exodus at least 8 weeks before departure as we can arrange this for you through our local operator.

It is no longer necessary for you to complete a currency declaration form upon arrival (unless you are carrying over US2000 with you). However, as this has only recently been implemented (summer 2018), you will still need to keep your receipts given by each hotel that you stay in - please hold on to these as they may be checked when you leave.

There have also been greater restrictions on bringing medicine into Uzbekistan. If you have any special medicine we recommend you check with the Uzbekistan Embassy about allowed quantities. You should also bring copies of your prescriptions and declare them upon arrival. Visa regulations can change without notice: please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

#### Kyrgyzstan

British, most European and most other nationalities, including Australians, New Zealanders, Americans and Canadians do not require visas for visits of under 60 days. All other nationalities should contact the nearest Kyrgyzstan Embassy if in doubt.

**IMPORTANT:** You can be arrested if you are not carrying ID in Kyrgyzstan. You should carry your passport or a copy of it with you at all times.

## Kazakhstan

A number of countries including the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand Germany, Belgium and France can enter Kazakhstan for up to 30 days without a visa.

## Turkmenistan

Everyone needs a passport with 6 months validity on it as well as a visa to enter Turkmenistan. A letter of invitation organised by the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan is necessary in order to obtain the visa and we can organise this through our partners. This allows you to obtain a visa on arrival at Ashgabat Airport. Please note that the State Migration Service usually issue a group letter of invitation with all participant's personal details on. We will need the following information and documents to obtain the letter of invitation:

Last name

First and middle name(s) on your passport

Any other name(s) used before (e.g. before marriage)

Name of highest educational institution completed

City and country of that institution

Field of study

Qualification

Occupation (if retired just put 'Retired')

Place of work (if retired just put 'Not Applicable')

Previous visits to Turkmenistan (dates, purposes)

Marital Status

Full name, date of birth and citizenship of spouse

Full name(s), date(s) of birth and citizenship of child(ren)

E-mail Address

Home address

- Full colour scan of the photo page of your passport showing all 4 edges of the passport making sure no part of the passport has been cut by the scan. This scan must be sharp and clear, not checkered, glossy or blurry and must be in either JPEG or PDF format and between 250KB and 1MB.

- A passport photo - minimum 3x4cms and not a photoshop version of the photo from the passport. If necessary it is possible to send a photo taken with a digital camera or phone as long as it meets the above requirements and does not use flash or have any glass reflections making any part of the scan/photo unclear.

Once our partners have applied for the invitation letter it can take about month to get it. Once you have the invitation letter you just need to present it upon arrival at Ashgabat Airport and pay the visa and administration fees. For UK citizens the visa fee for a visa up to 10 days is USD115 and the administration fee is USD4. For all other nationalities the visa fee for a visa up to 10 days is USD85 and the administration fee is USD4. Payment should be made in US Dollars cash (although credit/debit card payments are reportedly now accepted, it is better not to rely on this in case your bank blocks your cards or your card is not accepted).

Please note that Turkmenistan has a higher visa rejection rate than most countries. This is out of our control but we are able to reapply for the visa invitation letter, though only with the same information provided.

Please note that some medicines are banned in both Turkmenistan unless you are carrying a doctor's prescription. These include medicines which contain tramadol, morphin, opiates, codeine or similar components often found in pain killers.

**Please Note:** soon after your arrival (usually the morning after your arrival), a local representative will collect your passport in order to register your visit with the Turkmenistan State Tourist Registration Office (STRO). You will be issued with a stamp in your passport and your passport will be returned to you when the process is complete. This process can sometimes be delayed so we recommend that you carry a copy of your passport with you.

## Tajikistan

Most nationalities can complete an online Tajikistan evisa application: <https://www.evisa.tj> (<https://www.evisa.tj/>). The evisa costs US\$50 and usually takes about three working days for the application to come through - please allow more than this in case there is a delay for some reason. Please note that Yahoo is banned in Tajikistan and we advise that you do not give a Yahoo email address for your visa application as we believe that this can occasionally result in visas being denied.

The evisa type you require is 'individual' and to the question regarding GBAO Permit please answer 'NO' (this is a permit to visit a semi-autonomous region which we do not go to).

You will then have to upload a copy of your passport in the document section. You will also need to have the hotel name, address and phone number in Dushanbe to hand. Please note that a Letter of Invitation (LOI) is no longer required for most applicants.

Please ensure that you take a printed copy of the e-visa with you.

For assistance with obtaining visas please call Travcour on 020 8543 1846 or visit their website: <http://www.travcour.com/page/tour-packs/exodus.php> (<http://www.travcour.com/page/tour-packs/exodus.php>)

Visa regulations can change without notice: please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

## Vaccination

### Uzbekistan

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements. Recommended vaccinations are: Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Hepatitis A. The risk of malaria is slight but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice.

### Kyrgyzstan

No vaccinations are compulsory, but vaccination against typhoid, polio, tetanus, hepatitis A and diphtheria are recommended. The risk of Malaria is slight but you may wish to consult your GP or Travel Clinic for advice.

### Kazakhstan

No vaccinations are compulsory, but vaccination against typhoid, polio, tetanus, hepatitis A and Diphtheria are recommended.

### Turkmenistan

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements. Recommended vaccinations are: Tetanus and Hepatitis A. The risk of malaria is slight but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice.

### Tajikistan

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements. Recommended vaccinations are: Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A. The risk of malaria is slight but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice.

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information. Please note: vaccinations that are routinely recommended to residents of the UK, North America or Australasia are not considered to form part of the travel health advice, and you should ensure these are kept up to date where necessary.

For additional information please visit: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries> (<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>)

### Insurance - are you adequately covered?

It is a condition of joining any of our holidays that you must be fully insured against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs and air ambulance or helicopter rescue services where appropriate). On arrival in destination for your trip, you will be asked to present details to your leader or local representative of your policy.

If you are resident in the UK we strongly recommend the [Exodus travel insurance policy \(/au/insurance\)](#), this is specifically designed to cover all activities on your trip. If arranging your own policy please ensure that you are covered for all activities that are part of the trip, optional activities that you intend to take part in and/or on high altitude itineraries, that you are covered up to the maximum altitude of the trip.

## Local Time

**Uzbekistan's Timezone:** Asia/Tashkent +05 (GMT +05:00)

**Kyrgyzstan's Timezone:** Asia/Bishkek +06 (GMT +06:00)

**Kazakhstan's Timezone:** Asia/Almaty +06 (GMT +06:00)

**Turkmenistan's Timezone:** Asia/Ashgabat +05 (GMT +05:00)

**Tajikistan's Timezone:** Asia/Dushanbe +05 (GMT +05:00)

## Electricity

**Uzbekistan's Electricity:** Uzbekistan uses Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

**Kyrgyzstan's Electricity:** Kyrgyzstan uses Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

**Kazakhstan's Electricity:** Kazakhstan uses Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

**Turkmenistan's Electricity:** Turkmenistan uses Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

**Tajikistan's Electricity:** Tajikistan uses Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

Continental European style 2-prong plugs type C/F.

## Money

### Uzbekistan's Currency

Money exchange is done in banks or bureaux de changes.

The national currency of Uzbekistan is the Uzbeki Som (UZS), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 11000 to the UK£ and 8000 to the US\$.

The Som is subject to significant fluctuations so it is better to relate everything to the US Dollar. We recommend you bring your money in Dollars/Pounds as other currencies will be hard to change.

Make sure you bring plenty of small denomination notes. Notes issued before 1990, and any ripped or dirty notes, or notes with writing or stamps may not be accepted so please bear this in mind. It is difficult to change travellers cheques.

It is no longer necessary for you to complete a currency declaration form upon arrival (unless you are carrying over US2000 with you).

### Kyrgyzstan's Currency

The national currency of Kyrgyzstan is the Kyrgyz Som (KGS), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 91 to the UK£ and 69 to the US\$.

There are money change facilities in the main cities in Kyrgyzstan, including Bishkek and Osh. You need to bring US Dollars or Euros in cash as these are easy to change. GB Pounds can be changed in a few places but most money changers will not accept them. Please bring brand new notes as most money changers will not accept old notes. Larger denominations (\$50 or \$100 notes or Euros 50 or 100) attract a marginally better exchange rate but we recommend that you bring a mixture of denominations so that you can change just a small amount of money at a time if needs be. In Kyrgyzstan, smaller denominations of Kyrgyz Som are very useful.

### Kazakhstan's Currency

The national currency of Kazakhstan is the Kazak Tenge (KZT), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 450 to the UK£ and 338 to the US\$.

### Turkmenistan's Currency

The national currency of Turkmenistan is the Turkmen Manat (TMT), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 4.6 to the UK£ and 3.5 to the US\$.

It is possible to exchange US Dollars (clean, unmarked and undamaged - printed on or after 1996) into Manat at banks, and exchange offices. There are exchange offices at Ashgabat airport. Please note that it is strictly prohibited to exchange money on the black market with individuals in the bazaars, hotels etc.

It is impossible to change Turkmen Manat back into foreign currency so do not change too much money as you may be stuck with Manat upon leaving Turkmenistan.

### **Tajikistan's Currency**

The national currency of Tajikistan is the Tajik Somoni (TJS), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 11.5 to the UK£ and 9 to the US\$.

### **ATM Availability**

Whilst there are ATMs across the region, it is not easy or may not be possible at all, to get money out of them using a foreign card in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. There are ATMs in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan which normally work with foreign cards, but this is not always the case. You may be able to use a credit card in some select gift shops and exchange bureaux at large hotels as well as larger shops. It is safer, however, and recommended to take most of the money you think you will need in cash, especially USD.

### **Extra Expenses & Spending Money**

The amount of spending money required can vary depending on how much you spend on drinks and souvenirs, but as an indication, we recommend you bring at least US\$300 for meals not included and a further US\$150 for souvenirs, drinks and other incidentals.

Photo fees are payable at nearly all the sites in Uzbekistan - they vary from 5000 to 10000 Som. There are also photo fees in some sites in Turkmenistan, this can be up to US\$14 per photo, your tour leader can advise on when this may be the case.

As a rough guideline, you should allow approximately US\$8-10 per meal with a drink, or US\$15-20 per person per day.

### **Optional Activities**

There are a number of optional activities, which if you wish, your leader can help arrange for you. They are subject to schedules, weather and availability; your leader will let you know what is available and the local costs. Payment should be made locally in US Dollars. Below is an indication of the optional activities and their approximate costs and duration but these may vary throughout the season or depending on the number of participants and are given in good faith as a guideline only.

- Yurt setting up show at Son Kul Lake - USD70 per group (1-2 hours). Watch, or take part in, a demonstration of setting up a yurt with Kyrgyz nomads and learn about these dwellings.
- National Horseback riding games on the shore of Son Kul Lake - USD150 per group. Chance to watch various kinds of traditional Kyrgyz horseback riding games.
- Horse riding at Son Kul Lake - USD12 per horse for approx. 2 hours.
- Folklore musical show during dinner in Bishkek city - USD100 per group for (20 mins); USD150 per group (30 mins). Professional musicians will demonstrate the traditional musical instruments and play Kyrgyz melodies.

### **Tipping**

Given the nature of this trip, visiting five different countries, working with a tipping kitty may not really be practical, however, your leader will advise on whether it is possible to tip as a group. Tipping has become customary in these countries, especially with respect to tourist activities, though this is, of course, completely at your own discretion. As a guideline, we'd suggest planning on roughly US\$5 a day for tipping. Of this, a reasonable amount would be US\$2 to US\$2.50 a day for each local leader and the rest split between other staff. Most of the tips would go to the local leaders and drivers but you may wish to leave a tip for hotel staff as well - a tip equivalent to US\$1 for a hotel porter would be a nice gesture but it is entirely up to you. Tipping of your Western leader would be appreciated but again is at your discretion - we suggest tipping as a group at the end of the holiday.



## Responsible Tourism

At Exodus we believe in the power of Responsible Travel.

Every time we travel, we are part of a global movement that creates jobs, builds more sustainable societies, encourages cultural understanding and safeguards common natural and cultural heritage. To learn more about what Responsible Travel means to Exodus [click here \(/au/responsible-travel\)](/au/responsible-travel)...

## Exodus Community

### Join the Exodus online community

Don't forget to visit the Community area on our website. You can view the range of Exodus videos and podcasts, read trip write-ups which have featured in the national media and take advantage of some special deals on travel gear and equipment.

In the Community Travel Forum you'll find the Departure Lounge where you can discuss your trip with fellow travellers before you depart. When you get back from your holiday remember to upload your images to the relevant trip page on our website. This helps other people see what our holidays are really like and you'll be entered automatically into our monthly photo competition.

To make full use of the [Community \(/au/community\)](/au/community), you'll need to join My Exodus. It's free, registration is simple and easy, so what are you waiting for?

## Important Information

### On all guided trips

Although our leaders are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorise them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

Although rarely enforced, by booking this trip you agree to section 14 of our Booking Conditions which clearly states that our leaders have the authority to do this. In these circumstances we will ensure anyone sitting out is safely provided for and offered alternative options where possible. Refunds will not be provided for activities missed and customers may be liable for additional costs incurred.

### On all trips

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call the Exodus office and ask to speak to one of the experts on this itinerary.

In an emergency, please contact our 24 hour out of hours service on +44 (0) 844 326 7041.

Every time that you travel abroad you should take the time to read the warnings in the [essential information \(/au/about-exodus/essential-information\)](#) in the brochure.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure or website, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure and website. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary. Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

As fuel prices, airport taxes and exchange rates fluctuate, and airlines manage their rates to match demand, it is proving harder than ever to guarantee our Flight Inclusive prices. Although we endeavour to keep our website as accurate as possible, daily fluctuations mean that our Flight Inclusive price may be out of date. For accurate prices we recommend that you contact one of our Travel Experts, or your Travel Agent.

### **TRAVEL AWARE -STAY SAFE & HEALTHY ABROAD**

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the NHS have up-to-date advice on staying safe and healthy abroad. For more on security, local laws, plus passport and visa information, see <https://travellaware.campaign.gov.uk/> (<https://travellaware.campaign.gov.uk/>)

Keep informed of current travel health news by visiting <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/> (<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>)

Advice can change so check regularly for updates.

For all latest travel information about your holiday, please visit our [Travel Safety Advice \(/au/travel-safety-advice\)](#) page.

Please note, although this trip doesn't visit any FCO no-go areas, it does visit a region close to an area where the advice is not to travel. If joining this trip, or if planning any additional travel pre or post tour in the area, you should ensure you visit their website to familiarise yourself with the advice. Any independent travel to these areas is entirely at your own risk and is likely not to be covered by your insurance.

## **How to Book**

### **1. Check availability**

Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.

### **2. Secure your place**

You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.

### **3. Complete your booking and payment**

When you're ready to book, go to [www.exodus.co.uk \(/au/homepage\)](http://www.exodus.co.uk (/au/homepage)) for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque. Book with confidence: Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

### **TRIP NOTE VALIDITY**

These Trip Notes are valid from the "Current as" date on page one. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure; if there are any updates that significantly impact the inclusions or itinerary bookers will be written to separately. All customers will also receive a link to the most up-to-date version of the Trip Notes with their Final Joining Instructions pre-travel.

Version 1