



# Samarkand & Tamerlane's Testament (STT)

Ashgabat to Tashkent 15 days, departing 29 Apr 2012

Comfort Zone: Basic     Luxury

Physical Challenge: Easy     Hard

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: Ashgabat to Tashkent

Length: 15 days

Transport: Overland expedition vehicle.

Accommodation: Mainly good hotels and guesthouses, some wildcamps and one night in a traditional yurt homestay (20% camping, 80% hotels).



## Ratings for this trip

### Comfort Zone: Moderate

Moderate Comfort Level. These trips allow you to get off the beaten track with a few of your home comforts. On OVERLAND TRIPS expect there may be some wild camps, but with a predominance of campsites with good facilities (often with upgrades to rooms available) or staying in small hotels. Hotels will range from basic up to reasonably comfortable. Sharing will be on a 2, 3 or 4 person basis. On ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS we will have standard style accommodation, usually budget or tourist-class (2-3 star) accommodation with private facilities. Some accommodation may be on a multi-share basis. Transport will be a mixture of local and privately hired.

### Physical Challenge: Everyday Activities

EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES: Suitable for most fitness levels. Your itinerary may include easy-paced walks or bike rides, horse riding and other non-strenuous activities. On overland trips you will be camping at least some of the time.

## Countries Visited

### Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has some of the remotest scenery on Earth. Most of the country is covered by the inhospitable Karakum Desert. The indigenous people are the Turkmen, who mainly live outside the urban centres. The cities and towns are occupied by other peoples of the region. Most Turkmen still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life. Their existence revolves around carpet weaving. They are immensely hospitable people whose culture and way of life has altered little in hundreds of years. The route we take through the country will allow us to get off the main route and into the desert to meet the nomadic Turkmen in their traditional yurts.

In the capital of Ashgabat lies beautiful marble palaces and gleaming golden domes. is a unique modern city that has been extensively rebuilt in the last ten years since independence. Its futuristic and outrageous public buildings are an extraordinary sight. Little is left of the original Russian Imperial city that was destroyed by a massive earthquake in the 1940s.



Relax with some traditional Turkmenistan music and hear how most people sing a-Capella or sometimes with the aid of lutes and dutars. The sounds are incredible and as the singers act as healers or magicians, the style of folk music is revealed.

The majority of Turkmen food isn't spiced but is flavoured by cottonseed oil to give it a distinct taste. Shashlyk is a skewered grilled meat and is often served in restaurants or on the streets of Turkmenistan. Plov is one of the main dishes in the country and it consists of portions of mutton carrots and rice all fried together. This dish is eaten everyday as well as been served on special occasions.

## Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan contains many cultural treasures. This is the land of the great Khanates and Sultanates, the kingdoms that controlled the towns of the Silk Route, such as Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand. This country is the Silk Route at its best.

The capital is Tashkent, and dating back thousands of years, it started life as a little oasis at the hills of the Golestan mountains. As it has come into the present day, it has brought many treasures with it. Explore the city and find statues, museums and art galleries.

Follow the Silk Road and venture into the city of Samarkand. Samarkand is the great sultanate of Timur. This is the romantic city of the silk route. This is the city of the great Registan Square, where beautiful Medressas are loaded down with ornate majolica and azure mosaics. This city has enough majesty and magnificence to satisfy even the most ardent of culture vultures.



Next along the silk route is Bukhara, it feels lived in and has a real feel of living history. This is the atmosphere of Central Asia before the Russian domination. The colours of the city are browns, but the buildings are spectacular, especially the Ark Fortress, the Ismail Samanid Mausoleum and the Kalyan Minaret (Death Tower). The third of the main UNESCO sites is Khiva and is the best preserved Khanate. Its long bloody history is fascinating. The walls that used to provide sanctuary for the travellers on the Silk Route are intact as is the old town inside. The old town is beautifully decorated in classic turquoise tiles.

Uzbekistan is covered mostly by the Kyzyl Kum desert and striking mountain ranges. These are home to some of the beautiful wildlife that roams through the country. Brown bears, deers and the rare snow leopard all can be seen, and it is a world away from the urban areas of the country.

The music in Uzbekistan is similar to Persian classical music. Especially the style of Shashmaqam. This traditional sound makes use of lutes drums and jingles to create poetic love songs. This sound adds to the endless reasons as to why Uzbekistan is an awe inspiring country to visit.

## Daily Itinerary

### Day 1: Ashgabat

Sun 29 Apr 2012

**Border Information:** If joining in Ashgabat, enter Turkmenistan at Ashgabat Airport.

Today there will be a group meeting at 10:00 Hrs.

In the afternoon we make a visit to Ashgabat's famous Sunday market. Tonight we stay in a good quality hotel in Ashgabat.

Hotel for the night: Ak Altyn

### Ak Altyn Hotel

141/1 Magtymguly ave.

Ashgabat

744000

Turkmenistan

Tel: +99312-363700

Fax: +99312-363494

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

Discover the bizarre modern city of Ashgabat with its great hotels and restaurants

Included in tour

Explore, shop and haggle at the vast Tolkuchka Sunday Market

Included in tour

### Ashgabat

Ashgabat is a unique modern city that has been extensively rebuilt over the last ten years since the country gained independence. Little is left of the original Russian Imperial city as most of it was destroyed in a massive earthquake in 1948, today the centre is a unique mix of futuristic and outrageous public buildings that are an extraordinary sight. The earthquake affected every family in Ashgabat and is ingrained in the psyche of the local people. The Earthquake monument and museum are well worth a visit, as are



the Carpet and the National Museums. If you are into carpets, Turkmenistan is the country to visit, and if you are in Turkmenistan, Ashgabat's Sunday Market is the place to buy them. This wonderful market stretches for hundreds of acres into the desert. Carpets, camels, clothes, pigs, jewellery, goats, cars, chickens, hats and ex soviet military paraphernalia are readily available.

**Day 2: Darwasa**  
**Mon 30 Apr 2012**

After breakfast we drive out into the Karakum Desert. If time allows we will make a side trip to see the amazing Darwasa Gas Crater. Overnight near Darwasa where we will wildcamp.

**Darwasa**

From Darwasa, it's possible to hire local vehicles to visit the incredible open gas crater that's located nearby. It's a truly breathtaking sight; imagine a huge crater approximately the size of a football pitch, ablaze with a fire fed by natural gas vents, or failing that try to envisage what the entrance to the Underworld would look like, and chances are you'll be pretty close!



**Day 3: Kunye Urgench**  
**Tue 01 May 2012**

We continue our overland journey across the Karakum. We will visit the Kunye Urgench ruins en route to our wildcamp for the night.

**Kunye Urgench**

Kunye Urgench is situated on the shores of the Amu Daria River and was once the capital of the Khorezm region, which was part of the Achaemenid Empire. The old town is brimming with historic buildings dating back as far as the 11th century, including a mosque, mausoleum and towering 60-m high minaret.

**Day 4: Khiva**  
**Wed 02 May 2012**

**Border Information:** Exit Turkmeistan at Shovot, enter Uzbekistan at Nijazov.

This morning we drive to the border with Uzbekistan. Crossing the border around lunchtime we then continue on to Khiva. We stay in Khiva for 2 nights in a comfortable hotel.

**Khiva**

The small historic town of Khiva in Uzbekistan was once the capital of Khwarezmia and the Khanate of Khiva, a central asian state that existed from the 1500's right through until 1924, when it was fully incorporated into the Soviet Union. The city's long history is fascinating and fortunately much of the magnificent architecture has been incredibly well preserved. The ancient walls that used to provide sanctuary for the travellers on the Silk Route are intact, as is the old town that the walls were built to protect. Many of the buildings are beautifully decorated in classic turquoise tiles. As well as exploring the streets of the old city, you should make sure you visit the Kukhna Ark & Juma Mosque, Pakhlovan Mahmus Mausoleum and Islam Hodja Madrassa.



**Day 5: Khiva**  
**Thu 03 May 2012**

This morning we have a guided tour of this ancient city. The afternoon is free to explore this wonderfully preserved Khanate town. Second night in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided tour of the UNESCO heritage site of the old walled city of Khiva	Included in tour

**Day 6: Bukhara**  
**Fri 04 May 2012**

Leaving Khiva, most of today will be spent travelling. Our destination is the fascinating city of Bukhara where will spend the next 3 nights. Overnight in comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights to explore the historic and amazingly beautiful city of Bukhara	Included in tour
Wander the historic bazaars and markets of Bukhara where unbelievable bargains can be had	

**Bukhara**

Bukhara is an atmospheric city alive with it's history. Exploring the streets, you get the feeling that this is how Central Asia was before Soviet domination. Bukhara was once a very powerful Khanate, controlling most of Turkmenistan and the



surrounding area in years gone by. This has left the city with a rich and interesting history and many of the buildings here are spectacular, particularly the Ark Fortress, Ismail Samanid Mausoleum and the famous Kalyan Minaret (also known as the Death Tower). Today the Government has invested a considerable amount of money into the city, in order to preserve the architecture here, as some of the buildings are considered to be the finest in all of Uzbekistan.

### Day 7: Bukhara

Sat 05 May 2012

Today we will have a tour of Bukhara and the surrounding area, including the Ismail Samani Mausoleum, Kalon Mosque, Zindon Prison and Ark Fortress. Second night in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided city tour of Bukhara, including the Ark Fortress, Death Tower and Ismail Samanid Mausoleum	Included in tour

### Day 8: Bukhara

Sun 06 May 2012

Today is free for you to explore more of Bukhara and the surrounding area, or to just kick-back and take it easy for the day. Third night in comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Wander the historic bazaars and markets of Bukhara where unbelievable bargains can be had	Included in tour
The Prison 'Zindon'.	USD

### Day 9: Nurata

Mon 07 May 2012

Morning drive to Nurata in the Kyzylkhum Desert. Afternoon optional camel rides. Overnight in a desert yurt camp amongst the dunes.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Overnight in the Kyzylkhum Desert staying in yurts.	Included in tour

#### Nurata

Nurata is home to the Nurata mountains and is famous for its old circle patterned Suzani which sell for thousands at auctions. Dating back to The Bronze Age, you can see how amazingly historical this place is with so much knowledge to be gained here. The history doesn't stop there, as there are tenth century mosques and the place where the Chashma Springs formed.

### Day 10: Samarkand

Tue 08 May 2012

Morning exploring the Nurata Hills with the option of taking a dip in Lake Ajdar Kul. Afternoon drive to Samarkand where we will stay for the next 3 nights. Staying in a small friendly hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
3 nights discovering the majestic splendour of Samarkand	Included in tour
State Art Museum.	USD 1.5
Guri-amir Mausoleum.	USD
Hazrat-Hizr Mosque.	USD 0.5
Bibi Hanum Mosque.	USD

#### Samarkand

In the 14th century the city of Samarkand was the capital of the great sultanate of Timur. Thanks to its central location along the Silk Route, the town originally grew prosperous as a crossroads between East and West, creating a melting pot of different cultures and traditions whose influences are still very much apparent event today. Samarkand is perhaps the most romantic and evocative of the Silk Road cities, and crowned by the decorative domes and minarets of the many beautiful buildings here it certainly looks the part. The must-see's include Registan Square, which feels like the centre-point of the city, home to a group of impressively decorated Madressas, Guri Amir and the Shah-i-Zinda mausoleum.



### Day 11: Samarkand

Wed 09 May 2012

Today we will have a guided tour of Samarkand and the surrounding area, including The Registan, Ulugbek Medressa, Bibi-Khanyim Mosque and Shah-I-Zinda.

Second night in a comfortable local hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Guided visits to Shakh-I-Zinda, Registan Square & Tamerlane's Tomb in Samarkand	Included in tour

### Day 12: Samarkand

Thu 10 May 2012

Free day to explore the great sultanate of Timur, Samarkand.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Visit to Shakhrisabz city	USD 60

## Day 13: Tashkent

Fri 11 May 2012

This morning is free for you to explore more of Samarkand, or take it easy and have a lazy start to the day. In the afternoon we will drive on to the old soviet city of Tashkent. Whilst in Tashkent we stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Activity	Approximate Cost
One night to explore Urban Tashkent	Included in tour
Art Gallery of Uzbekistan.	USD 0.3
Museum of Applied Arts.	USD 0.6
History Museum of the People of Uzbekistan.	USD 2
Chorsu Bazaar.	USD

Soviet city, because old Tashkent was largely destroyed by a series of earthquakes and Soviet planners. Having said that, it is still a great place to visit. The city has a clean, modern feel and there is some unusual contemporary architecture here, which makes it an interesting contrast to many other places along the Silk Road. The city markets (especially the Chorsu Bazaar) are well worth strolling around, you can get some excellent souvenirs here as there is a huge amount of Soviet ephemera on sale, ranging from entire Soviet stamp collections, old paintings of Lenin, through to Military uniforms. You should also try to plan a journey that involves a trip on the metro, so you can take in the impressive architecture and decoration of the Tashkent underground. Then after a busy day sightseeing, you might like to head out for a meal at one of the old Imperial Russian style nightclub/ restaurants which often put on some unbelievably risqué cabaret.

## Day 14: Tashkent

Sat 12 May 2012

Free day to explore the old Soviet city of Tashkent. Second night in comfortable hotel.

## Day 15: Tashkent

Sun 13 May 2012

**Border Information:** If finishing in Tashkent, exit Uzbekistan at Tashkent Airport.

Free time in Tashkent.

### Tashkent

Tashkent was once the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union. Whilst the historic cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva still retain much of the atmosphere of the ancient Khanates, Tashkent is very definitely a

## Visa Information:

Most countries we visit on our travels will require visas. Some are best obtained before you leave home and others can be obtained en-route. Whilst the ultimate responsibility for obtaining visas is yours, we will endeavour to assist you wherever possible.

The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. The information provided is given in good faith and we do try to keep the visa information as up to date as possible. Please be aware though that rules do change, often without prior warning, which is why it is important that you check for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance you can choose to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy/ consulate. However our recommendation is that you use a visa agent to assist you with your applications. While this does increase the cost it will make the process much easier for you. Dragoman have teamed up with 'The Visa Machine' to create a safe, secure, hassle-free way of obtaining visas and visa advice. Our unique link within their website is designed to make the visa process as straightforward as possible. Simply go to <https://dragoman.thevisamachine.com> and click on your region of travel followed by your trip route and 'The Visa Machine' will advise you about not only the required visas but also the dates by which you should apply. 'The Visa Machine' can then assist you in the actual visa application thus taking all the worry and hassle out of the process. This should apply for ALL nationalities and countries of residence.

As you will need to submit your passport together with your applications, we recommend that you avoid making any travel plans in the weeks leading up to your departure. However if you do need to travel in this period please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help you work out the options for your visa application process.

### Ashgabat to Tashkent Visas

In order to make the visa process as easy as possible we have teamed up with The Visa Machine.

Please click on [Ashgabat to Tashkent Visa Information](#) link where you will be able to view all the visa cut off dates and all your visa information for ALL departures.

## Tashkent to Ashgabat Visas

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## Turkmenistan Eastbound

All visitors to Turkmenistan require a visa and this must be obtained **in Advance**. Visas can only be issued once a letter of Invitation (LOI) has been obtained.

The cost of the visa varies depending on your nationality.

### Starting any trip in Ashgabat

If you are flying into Ashgabat you can obtain your visa on arrival at Saparmurat Turkmenbashi International Airport. This will cost approximately US\$ 85. A printed copy of your approved Invitation letter will be required at the check-in desk for your flight to Ashgabat as proof of visa authorisation. Dragoman will once again apply for this on your behalf but please note, Dragoman will require exact details of your intended arrival date and flight details before we can start this process.

## Turkmenistan Westbound

All visitors to Turkmenistan require a visa. It is possible to obtain this visa at the land border on all Westbound trips. Visas can only be issued once a letter of Invitation (LOI) has been obtained.

The cost of the visa varies depending on your nationality.

## Uzbekistan Eastbound

Most nationalities require a visa to visit Uzbekistan. You should obtain a visa **in advance**.

A letter of invitation is required for most nationalities to obtain an Uzbekistan visa. These are issued for specific dates according to your itinerary.

Some nationalities **may not** need an Invitation letter if applying for an Uzbek visa in their country of residency (citizens of the US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, France, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and Latvia). However please note that if you are planning to apply for a visa outside of your country of residency, an Invitation letter will be required. We also advise you to check with the Embassy at which your application will be processed for exact information on documents required.

All nationalities should check with their respective embassies for more information and costs.

\*Please note that if you decide to obtain your visa in a different location (to that stated on the Central Asia visa form), a new letter of invitation will be required which will **delay** you obtaining your visa therefore it is vital that you are clear on where you will obtain your visa. \*

## Uzbekistan Westbound

Most nationalities require a visa to visit Uzbekistan.

A letter of invitation is required for most nationalities to obtain an Uzbekistan visa. These are issued for specific dates according to your itinerary.

Some nationalities **may not** need an Invitation letter if applying for an Uzbek visa in their country of residency (citizens of the US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, France, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and Latvia). However please note that if you are planning to apply for a visa outside of your country of residency, an Invitation letter will be required. We also advise you to check with the Embassy at which your application will be processed for exact information on documents required.

All nationalities should check with their respective embassies for more information and costs.

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## How to obtain a Letter of Invitation

Dragoman will apply for the letter of invitation on your behalf. In order to do this we need you to complete the Central Asia & China visa form found here [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/14ph3QNCagsR6WhXd8WwlaUcTSQ\\_in5RrMM4iD19KJbw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/14ph3QNCagsR6WhXd8WwlaUcTSQ_in5RrMM4iD19KJbw/viewform). Once you have completed this form we will require you to email the following documents to [hello@thevisamachine.co.uk](mailto:hello@thevisamachine.co.uk) and [centralasiavisas@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:centralasiavisas@dragoman.co.uk).

1. scanned copy of your passport (Clear, colour copies only)
2. Letter of Employment (a letter from your employer stating that you are employed by the company and that you are travelling for tourism purposes only). Students need to provide details of their University and a letter from the university stating you attend. If you are self-employed or retired please indicate this on the Central Asia Visa

Please complete the Central Asia visa form as soon as possible after booking. Any delays in returning this form, along with the associated documents, will have a knock on effect to the amount of time you have in applying for the actual visa.

Once this letter has been authorised a copy will be sent to you. You can then begin the process of applying for your visa. Please be aware that the invitation letter is only valid for a 3 month period, you must apply for a visa within 3 months of the invitation letter being issued.

\*Please note that if you decide to obtain your visa in a different location, a new letter of invitation will be required which will **delay** you obtaining your visa therefore it is vital that you are clear on where you will obtain your visa. \*

For further information and details of how to fill out your application form please visit <http://dragoman.thevisamachine.com/> and search for your trip.

## Where to obtain your visa

### Uzbekistan

It is advisable that you obtain yours visa in advance i.e. London, Washington DC, Berlin, Singapore, Jakarta etc

However if you are **starting your trip in Beijing, Xian or Bishkek** it is possible to obtain your Uzbekistan visa in Bishkek with your trip leaders. Please advise us on the Asia Visa form if you wish to do this. You will still require a letter on invitation in order to obtain a visa here.

If there is **NOT** an Uzbekistan Embassy or Consulate in your country of residency (e.g Australia / New Zealand) **AND** your trip starts in; **Tashkent** - It is possible to obtain a visa at the international arrivals lounge of Tashkent International Airport, if both of the following conditions are met:

- There is no Uzbekistan Embassy or Consulate in the country, where you are originating your flight to Uzbekistan,
- Connecting flight to Uzbekistan, in the country where Uzbekistan Embassy or Consulate exists, does not provide enough time to obtain a visa.

If you wish to obtain your visa in Tashkent on arrival please state 'Tashkent airport' on your Asia visa form. You will still require a letter on invitation in order to obtain a visa here.

### Turkmenistan

It is possible to get a visa for Turkmenistan on arrival at the land border (once your LOI has been obtained) on all westbound trips. You must get this visa in advance for all eastbound trips.

## Visa Validity

A single entry visa is valid for a period of 1 month. It is advisable when applying for your visa that you state entry/exit dates 2 days either side of the actual entry/exit dates.

The validity of a visa starts from date of issue and is valid for a period of 3 months. Applicants must enter Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan before the expiration date listed on the visa.

Information to help fill in your visa application form is below.

Name of Host - Please contact your agent to obtain this information.

Address in Uzbekistan- Grand Orzu Hotel,  
27 Makhmud Tarobi Street, Tashkent

Uzbekistan

## Important Notes

### **The routes, activities and places visited described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.**

We intend following the planned route but exact night stops cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our basic planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. By their very nature overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, often in areas without western infrastructure. You should expect that some these areas do not adhere to western safety standards.

### **Visa note**

Visas for this trip can take many weeks to be issued and it can be a lengthy process. Please ensure that you book early to avoid disappointment. Central Asia visa support letters are included in the trip price. NB: These are not the actual visas but necessary supporting documents, visa costs are a separate to the trip price.

Please note that from time to time some visa applications are rejected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Turkmenistan and /or Uzbekistan or incorrect dates given for travel. If this happens, Dragoman will contact you as soon as it is known and we will help you arrange alternative travel plans. Unfortunately Dragoman Overseas Travel cannot be held responsible if your visa application is refused.

### **Pre trip accommodation in Ashgabat**

All tourists must register within three days of arrival in Ashgabat with the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan. This registration procedure will be carried out by Dragoman's local agent in Turkmenistan on arrival at your hotel in Ashgabat (if arriving before the trips start date) or with the group on the first day of your trip.

Due to the registration procedure we ask all clients arriving in Ashgabat before your trip starts to contact Dragoman or you booking agent with full arrival details i.e. flight number, date and time of arrival at Ashgabat airport. We also ask that all clients wishing to book pre trip accommodation do so directly with either Dragoman or your booking agent in order for the registration procedure to be carried out.

For full details and prices of pre trip accommodation in Ashgabat please contact your sales agent.

### **Taxis / transfers from Ashgabat airport to your hotel**

There are licensed taxis in Turkmenistan, which are clearly identified and yellow in colour. Although the taxis have meters to calculate the fare, drivers will usually ask foreign nationals for a set fee of around 5 to 10 Manat (taxis from the airport cost more and they usually ask for US\$). Most taxi drivers do not speak much English. It is also possible to flag down ordinary cars from the roadside and negotiate a fee with the driver for the journey to your destination. The British FCO advise against this as there is usually no insurance cover, the servicing of the cars is very likely to be infrequent and of poor quality and they are unlikely to have working seatbelts.

Alternatively transfers from Ashgabat airport to your hotel can be booked directly through Dragoman or your booking agent in advance. For full details please contact your booking agent.

## Physical Preparation

Physical preparation for Asia Itineraries

In Asia you will need to be healthy enough to cope with extremes of climates from the hot deserts through to the colds of the high mountains. Overland travelling can be demanding - long, rough travel days, dusty conditions can be challenging to some. You will need to be fit enough to help every day with the camp chores (cooking, washing up, general camp set up) as well as putting up and taking down your own tent. There are some long driving days and some early morning starts. The step up into the overland vehicle, while not overly high can become tiring and you need to judge yourself to be physically fit enough to haul yourself up and down the step at least 8-10 times a day. By and large our Asia trips have a good range of hotel accommodation mixed up with camping so that life is not too rough.

## Personal Spending

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between a minimum of US\$15 and a maximum of US\$30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between a minimum of US\$10 and a maximum of US\$20 for India, Nepal and South East Asia.

This will cover individual expenses such as drinks, meals whilst out and also when staying in hotels, souvenirs, tips and personal permits.

**Please note:** For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately **\$130USD** extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs

## What else you need to know

### Pre and post trip accommodation and connecting flights

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of your joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay. Dragoman can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on.

While Dragoman is happy to assist with booking your pre and post trip accommodation, it is important that you understand you may be able to book your own room at a cheaper rate directly through the hotel or on the internet.

Our additional accommodation prices are based on the hotel's rate plus an administration fee. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival, however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer as not all hotels offer this service.

### Accommodation on tour

Dragoman overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip, in accommodation ranging from twin to multi-share. The type and variety of accommodation is determined by conditions on each of our routes. The campsites will range from rather basic to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars. In some cases it may also be possible to upgrade locally to bungalows, lodges or even tree-houses. One of the highlights of overlanding is that in more remote areas we will wild camp. This allows us to get far away from the tourist crowds to some beautiful, secluded spots. We will also arrange as many village or local homestays as possible, allowing us to get close to indigenous populations and ensures our money stays within local communities.

### Group size?

The maximum group size we take on our overland journeys ranges from 19 to 22 depending on the geographical location, however the average number of passengers is more likely to be around 16.

Please note that there is an overlap of 2 trips in Zanzibar. This means a group starting a trip in Nairobi for example will visit Zanzibar at the same time as groups starting their trips in Dar es Salaam. In practical terms this means there could be up to 44 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

### Who travels with Dragoman?

Our passengers come from around the world and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that overlanding should be open to as many people as possible and so although we have a minimum age limit of 18, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the beauties of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

### Our Community

At any time before or after you book you can join our community - Dragoland. This is a great place to ask questions before you travel and catch up with your fellow travellers once your trip has finished. You can share photos, videos and stories You can also download a selection of free travel apps. See the home page to sign in, it's free and easy.

We also have a Facebook page where travellers regularly swap info with each other - you can [join here](#)

## Our crew and guides

Our crew are passionate about travel and always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all overland companies, spending 10 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK and then up to six months on the road as a trainee. On all Dragoman overland trips two western crew who are responsible for the group and the overall organisation will accompany you. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad knowledge of the places visited and to offer suggestions of things to do and see. In East and Southern Africa we will also have an African camp master/cook who is in charge of running the camp and organising all of the meals. Their knowledge of the local produce makes shopping at the markets great fun and you will learn how to prepare and cook some unusual dishes. In the rest of Africa, South America and the majority of Central Asia and China we use local guides who may stay with us for just a few hours or will actually travel with us for some or all of the journey. In these cases they become a third crew member and are able to offer their local knowledge as well as a real insight into the lives of the local people.

(If travelling in East & Southern Africa, also please see the note about our code-share crew)

Your tour leader has a duty of care to all of their passengers and therefore they have the authority to ask passengers to leave the trip if they require medical assistance, are behaving in an anti-social manner or refuse to comply with local laws and customs. In all matters relating to the trip, the leader's decision will be final and we appreciate your respect of this.

## Medical conditions

We ask all of our passengers to declare any pre-existing medical conditions and in some cases you will be asked to complete one of our medical questionnaires. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude we also require all passengers to complete an altitude questionnaire. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases passengers should be prepared for some long driving days and possible limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns.

## Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to region and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in. It is essential that you check with either your doctor or a travel clinic in good time before you travel.

In the UK we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive, up to date vaccination and health information. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at [Nomad Travel clinics](#).

A good source of up to date information is the World Health Organisation - <http://www.who.int/en/>

## Malaria

Get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your vaccination centre for the most up-to-date requirements

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wear long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, tent doors or, if sleeping out, use a mosquito net. Wear repellent applied directly to the skin or soaked into clothing.

Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permethrin solution provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights, in hotel rooms but cannot be used inside the tents.

## Meals and group participation

On an overland journey you are more than just a passenger, you're part of the crew, pitching in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. We operate a rota system, dividing the group into smaller units of 5 or 6 people, so that these duties are shared equally amongst the group. These jobs will include things like collecting water and firewood, loading the back locker, supervising the kitty and food stores etc. While camping on overland journeys, all meals will be included in the kitty and this means that you will be working as a group to prepare meals and cook for your group. (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck, however you will still be required to help prepare meals). If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your crew at your welcome meeting. A typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, cereal and something hot such as eggs or pancakes as well as tea and coffee. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto, pasta dish and there is always the chance to try some local cooking. Generally our passengers find the more they put into a trip, the more they benefit from it.

## Responsible tourism & code of conduct

Dragoman is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We are dedicated to making sure that we adopt a responsible attitude to the areas through which we travel and believe that our trips should benefit the local people and their environment. Dragoman recognises that we are guests of local communities and strive to make these communities our partners, so that they benefit directly from our visit.

You can find full details of Dragoman's responsible tourism policy linked from the home page. All passengers are required to obey all laws of the countries through which we pass. This particularly applies to the smuggling of contraband and possession of narcotic drugs, firearms, antiquities and ivory. Any passenger found contravening such laws or customs may be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

## Overland travel and security

One of the real advantages of overland travel is that the vehicle provides a very real level of security when travelling. There is no doubt that a properly equipped overland vehicle, with safes, fully lockable doors and windows is an obvious advantage when travelling in much of the world. We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt whilst travelling for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items (although most of these can be locked in the safe whilst you are on the trip) and advise passengers to leave any valuable jewellery, watches etc at home. Generally speaking, you will not be travelling on local public transport and will have the added security of travelling in a group with experienced crew on hand to offer advice.

**Please note:** Any personal effects that are left on the truck, even if they are stored in the safe, are left at your own risk and Dragoman cannot be held responsible for any damage or theft that may occur.

The safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a major priority of Dragoman. With this in mind we monitor world events very closely. By the very nature of the adventure travel that we take, there are risks and hazards that are inherent in our itineraries. Dragoman makes operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources:

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

Reports from other travel companies and local suppliers

Leaders reports from off the road

Local contacts we have built up over 29 years of experience

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. You should always make yourself aware of the travel advice before you book and again before you travel. Below are links to some of the websites

Britain. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country>

Australia. <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

New Zealand. <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

United States. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

Canada. [http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries\\_pays/menu-eng.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp)

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £3,000,000 and £10,000,000 respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

## Emergency contact

We have a dedicated 24 hour telephone number which should only be used once you have left the UK and in the event of a real emergency. Should you need to call the number, we will do what we can to help but please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled, please let us know and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in these trip notes. If you cannot get through leave a message and a contact number as these will be regularly checked and the crew informed if necessary.

**Emergency Number: +44 (0) 7985106564.**

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel. As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding and that the 24 Hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas. We recommend that any policy has the following minimum levels of cover: Medical (incl. repatriation) £5,000,000 Personal Liability £5,000,000 Cancellation and Curtailment £5,000 Loss of Baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice.

## Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on [customer\\_relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer_relations@dragoman.co.uk). You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or "visitor's" passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for you trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

## Luggage & Kit List

Although you will not have to carry your main bag long distances you will need to help load and unload them onto the truck. For this reason we recommend that you use a backpack or soft bag rather than a heavy suitcase. During your trip your main luggage will be kept in the back locker so you will also need a small daypack. This can be used to carry your camera, water bottle and other personal effects for daily use.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. Different trucks have different-sized lockers however to be safe we recommend that your bag be no larger than 66cm deep, 30cm wide, and 30cm high. The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is maximum 20kg. Backpacks should not have an external frame unless it can be easily removed and stored separately to avoid damaging other people's luggage.

Your clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats (except on routes between Nairobi and Cape Town where ground mats are provided).

The clothes and equipment should be appropriate for the conditions you are travelling in, which will vary depending on which part of the world you're heading to. On overland trips Dragoman will provide all camping equipment apart from sleeping bags and ground mats\*, so you'll need to bring those with you. Think about the climate and altitude of the areas you'll be travelling to, there's nothing worse than being cold at night so it's worth investing in a decent sleeping bag if it's likely to get cold. And remember even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

*\*Ground mats are provided on our non "in-depth" overland trips that run in South and East Africa, between Nairobi and Cape Town.*

For a general idea of what you need this list provides a guide:

- Sleeping bag - Check the expected climate en route. Nights in desert and mountain regions can be very cold in winter months
- Mattress or compressed foam
- A day pack is useful for short hikes in the countryside, wandering around cities, etc and also for keeping inside the vehicle for items used during the day
- 2 sets of comfortable travelling clothes (light, easily washable cotton clothes are best)

- 1 set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out. Women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf for visiting places of worship
- 2 pairs of shorts
- Sun hat or warm hat if trekking
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Warm sweater/fleeces
- 1 waterproof jacket with hood
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes/boots (or ankle height canvas jungle boots)
- 1 pair of sandals or flip-flops
- Underwear and socks (thermals are also a good idea if you are travelling to altitude or to the desert as it can get very cold at night)
- Swimwear
- 2 small towels
- Washing kit, including a small mirror
- Clothes washing detergent, small scrubbing brush & washing line (just a length of cord)
- Head torch/flashlight with spare batteries & bulbs (only the 3 standard sizes of round 1.5v batteries are widely available en route)
- Passport photos (average of 2 per country for which visas will be applied for en route)
- Good water bottle at least 1 litre
- A pouch or money belt worn inside your clothing, or unobtrusive pocket sewn into the inside of a pair of loose fitting trousers, is a must.
- Alarm clock
- Pocket calculator (useful when exchanging money)
- Writing materials & notebook/diary
- Multi purpose knife
- Cotton sheet sleeping bag (or sheet folded and sewn up on 2 sides). It will help keep your sleeping bag clean, and can be used on its own on warm nights.
- Mosquito net - The tents supplied by us have mosquito netting and you will only need a net if you think you will sleep out under the stars a lot of the time.
- "Wet Ones" (moistened tissues) and hand gel
- Toilet paper - this can be purchased almost everywhere en-route but one roll is worth packing
- Assorted sized plastic bags - protects clothing and equipment from dust and damp

For a comprehensive kit lists take a look at the Dragoman kit list that Nomad Travel have created. Dragoman customers will receive a 10% discount on all equipment purchased either online or in store. Click to see the kit lists [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/kitlist/overlanders-kit-list)

## Water

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in bottles, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 liters of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Please avoid the purchase of bottled water by using the chemically sterilized water stored in the purpose built storage tank or in water jerry cans in your Overland vehicle. You are free to refill your bottle as many times a day as you like. You are helping the environment and your hip pocket!

## Personal medical kit

All of our trucks have a fully stocked medical kit onboard for use in emergency situations only. Therefore in addition to this we recommend that you purchase your own personal medical kit. In the UK we have teamed up with Nomad Travel Stores and Clinics to produce the Dragoman Travel Medical Kit. It has been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contains everything you would need for any minor accidents. For more details please visit their website:

[nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit](http://nomadtravel.co.uk/catalog/view/dragoman-medical-kit)

## Electrical equipment

Your vehicle will be equipped with a 12 volt socket so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12 volt adapter - the type that can be used from a cigarette lighter in your car. Please be aware that only one piece of equipment can be charged at a time and it will not be allowed if there is a risk of running the vehicle's batteries low. Batteries may also be recharged from hotel room wall sockets and the majority of the campsites we stay at have electricity points so please bring along your normal charging adapters as well. You will need to ensure that you have the correct country adaptor for your specific charger.

## The kitty

The Kitty is a group fund paid separately from the trip price at the start of your trip which covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park entrances, excursions and local guides).

It is an amount that each passenger puts into a central fund and is monitored by the Dragoman crew. It's payable in full at the start of your trip, and in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips

The kitty system is very unique to over landing as it allows us to have flexibility on the road. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally.

The kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Local inflation and costs vary throughout the year and so we review kitties on a monthly basis. Once you book your trip it is very important that you check our website on a regular basis and just before departure for any changes to the kitty amount.

Your kitty can be paid in a mixture of US Dollar cash and local currency and most of our travellers choose to bring a cash passport with them for withdrawing local currency (you can visit [www.cashpassport.com](http://www.cashpassport.com) for further information on these). This is a very secure way of carrying your money whilst travelling. You treat them exactly like an ATM card and draw out local currency from an ATM to give to your leader within each country.

Travellers cheques have become increasingly difficult to change around the world with passengers and our leaders experiencing huge frustration and numerous hours spent trying to find a bank which will change travellers cheques. For this reason we no longer accept them on our trips.

## Continuing your trip

Having an amazing trip and met a great group of people? Having too much fun to go home yet? If on your trip you decide you would like to continue, then why not speak to your trip leader who can advise you of the cost and availability of continuing your journey.

## Contingency emergency fund

Sometimes, civil or political unrest, or reasons beyond Dragoman's control (e.g. a natural disaster), can mean that an itinerary is disrupted and we have to make a contingency plan. This may involve hiring alternate transport or even the whole group flying over an area. Although Dragoman will help organise travel arrangements, in circumstances outside Dragoman's control you should be prepared to contribute towards the costs and therefore we ask you to bring along a 'Contingency Fund' of USD400. In almost all cases trips run smoothly and this fund is therefore never used. We also recommend that you take along an internationally recognised credit or charge card with a decent limit in case of emergencies, such as medical treatment en route, or even the need to be repatriated; though these occurrences are rare. Remember that travel insurance policies usually only refund you for expenses after you have already paid out.

## Tipping

Tipping is entirely voluntary. The Dragoman crew may be travelling with you for many weeks and usually they become good friends with most members of the group. It is sometimes easy to forget that they do work hard to ensure that you do have a great trip. If you feel you would like to tip them, they certainly would appreciate it. On a number of our trips, we also use a local guide as well as our own Dragoman crew. These guides live and travel with you through their home country and it is usual to tip them when they leave. We recommend USD10 to USD15 per person.

## Currencies & Cash

It is not really worth trying to buy local currencies before you travel. Do also bear in mind that many countries have strict regulations about the amount of their own local currency you are allowed to import - if you are found with amounts in excess of the allowed amounts, it may well be confiscated!

For trips in Turkey, South East Asia, India and Nepal a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is best. However, most of our past passengers have said they wished they had been told to bring more cash. Apart from the convenience of being able to change money in many more places, you will sometimes get a much better exchange rate for cash.

For trips in Central Asia, China, Burma and Mongolia please refer to the money exchange notes.

You should take a mixture of denomination notes. Banks and moneychangers in most countries will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are dated from 2003 or later. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Cash machines are readily available in most areas but are not always reliable therefore we recommend that you do not rely on them as your only source of cash. Credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most commonly accepted, but be prepared for very high commission

charges. Please do not rely on cards for daily use, as they are not always accepted outside of larger towns and cities. Please bring a mixture of small and large denominations as in more remote areas it can be hard to change amounts over \$50.

## **Money Exchange**

### **Turkmenistan**

The official currency of Turkmenistan is the manat (M). It's set at a fixed government exchange rate, but traded for far less on the black market. As ATM's are virtually non-existent, you're best to exchange foreign currency once inside the country. Don't bother with travellers cheques - they're not accepted anywhere. The black market is easy and accessible to foreigners, and the only place you'll get a realistic exchange rate.

### **Uzbekistan**

The official currency in Uzbekistan is the Uzbekistan Som (UZS) this can only be obtained in Uzbekistan. Conversion of UZS back into other foreign currencies may prove difficult.

Banks are rarely able to exchange foreign currency so you should ask the advice of your hotel or leader for where to change money. There are also many private money changers in Uzbekistan but if you choose to use them you must be sure to check the rate and your change carefully.

Major credit cards are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants even in bigger cities. Some banks in Tashkent will allow cash advances against a credit card but cash withdrawals are subject to a 5% or more service charges.

In Tashkent you may be able to find ATMs that accept international cards and use them to withdraw local currency; however these should not be relied on as your sole financial source. Some souvenir sellers and tourist restaurants may accept USD or EUR as payment but all other purchases in Uzbekistan must be made in local currency.

Please note that you must declare ALL currency (including travellers cheques) on entry to and exit Uzbekistan. Failure to do so accurately, or exiting the country with more currency than when you entered may result in delays, fines or the additional sums being confiscated.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey, once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, information and kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these Trip Notes

These trip notes were printed on 23/05/2013