

## SILK ROAD & THE GREAT WALL, (ERBN)

Beijing to Tbilisi 91 days, departing 13 Jul 2020



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## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

**Route:** Beijing to Tbilisi

**Duration:** 91 days

**Transport:** Overland expedition vehicle, Jeep, Public bus, Russian bus, Taxi, Boat, Metro

 20%  80%

**Accom:** Hotels, Hostels, Guesthouses, Wild Camps, Yurts, Homestays, Overnight Train

### Physical Challenge:

EASY  HARD

Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours at altitude or across hilly terrain, multi-day treks at sea level, horseback riding, canoeing and other adventurous activities.

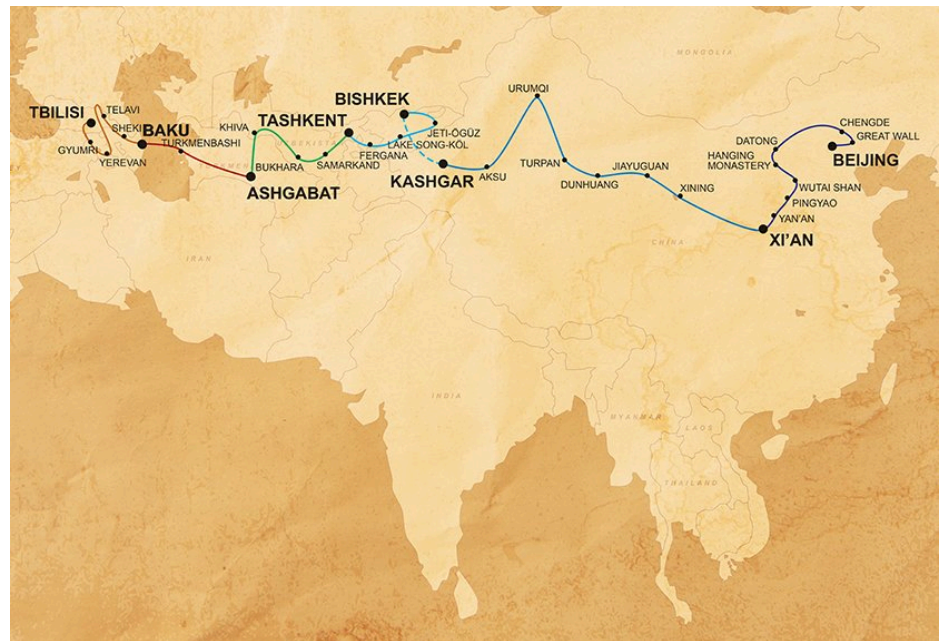
### Lifestyle Challenge:

EASY  HARD

You may be camping some of the time but the pace of the trip is fairly relaxed and the facilities and road conditions are generally of a high standard.

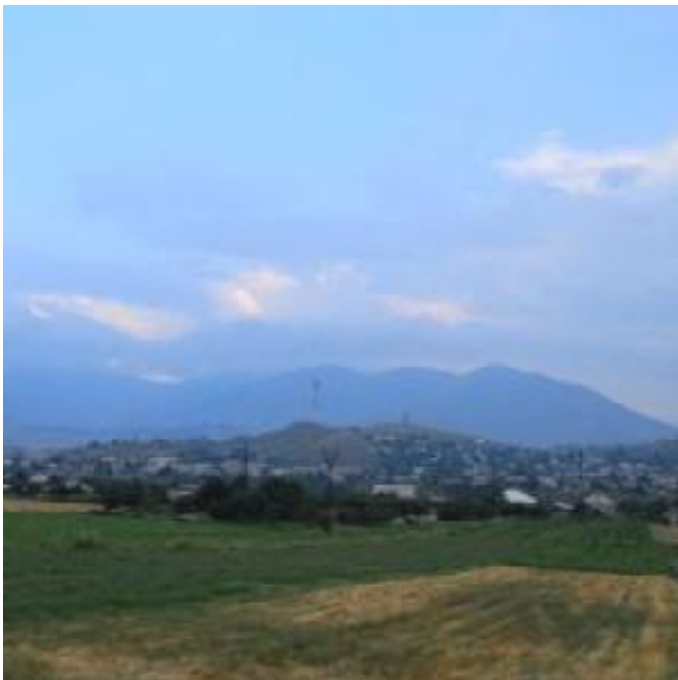
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## ROUTE MAP



## COUNTRIES VISITED

### Armenia



Armenia is a small country connecting Europe and Asia. The country has a rich culture & ancient history dating back thousands of years. This is a destination where you will be awed by the thousands of historical monuments, delighted by the dramatic landscapes and welcomed by the locals providing traditional hospitality and

### Azerbaijan



Azerbaijan is a fascinating and rarely-visited country on the western shore of the Caspian Sea. The country has an incredibly rich history, including a tumultuous series of Turkish, Arabic and Persian invasions, which makes it a melting pot of different peoples and religions today.

We travel through this wonderful country, visiting the ancient petroglyphs of [Gobustan](#) and the old town of Sheki as well as the buzzing capital of Baku on the coast of the Caspian.

delicious healthy food.

## China



### ENDLESS HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE OVERLAND TRAVELLER

As one of the world's largest countries and the most populous, there is so much to discover and explore in China.

Understanding the history of China is key to understanding modern China. The people are proud of its past, and keen to share its heritage with the world. In a country that defies superlatives, the words 'vast', 'astonishing' and 'variation' don't really seem to cover it - China really does have it all!

### STUNNING NATURAL SCENERY

From the phenomenal karst rock formations and mountains of the south, the vast deserts of the west, the high plateau and towering mountains of Tibet, and the incredible rolling landscapes of the east, China contains some of the most stunning and varied scenery to be found in all of Asia. The entire country is teeming with beautifully-chaotic modern cities juxtaposed with thousands of years of fascinating history and heritage. Throughout the country, China's unique culture, music, architecture, history, cuisine and society shines

## JOURNEY ALONG THE SILK ROAD

Our overland adventure tours to this region also include journeys through Turkmenistan, Georgia & Turkey, calling at historic Silk Road destinations including Ashgabat and Tashkent. You can even travel as far as [China](#) from Istanbul for an epic overland trip of a lifetime!

## Georgia



Georgia is a mountainous country in the southern Caucasus range - it is a wonderfully-scenic region with famously warm and welcoming people. As a strongly Orthodox Christian country, Georgia has some of the most historic Christian monuments on the planet. The age and condition of the churches and monasteries, many dating back to the 5th Century CE, is staggering.

### GREAT THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

Being such a small country it is possible to see and do a great deal in a short time and yet, because of its geographical and cultural isolation from the West, it is seldom visited by Western travellers.

Our trips take in some of the country's best highlights, such as the stunning Prometheus Caves, the birthplace of the infamous Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, the spectacular mountain town of Stepantsminda, and the wineries and hospitality of [Telavi](#).

through, and we immerse ourselves in it through every journey through it.

Beijing is the hub of political and international focus - it is truly a magnificent modern city merged with the ancient heritage and architecture of the past, such as its celebrated sites of the Forbidden Palace and the Summer Temple.

### ANCIENT CHINA & HOLY TEMPLES

China has endless highlights such as the world-famous Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, the incredible scenery of the Tian Shan mountains near Kashgar, the Buddhist caves of Dunhuang, Dazu and Datong, the incredible holy mountain temples of Wudang Shan, Wutai Shan, Kongtong and Emei Shan, the stunning traditional towns of Pingyao, Lijiang and Dali, and of course the phenomenal Great Wall of China, one of the world's great sights!

### Kyrgyzstan



Kyrgyzstan is a spectacularly scenic country in the heart of the Tian Shan mountains, and is many people's favourite part of Central Asia!

### TREKKING, HORSE-RIDING & WILD CAMPING

The towering mountains and shimmering lakes are the perfect place for trekking and horse riding. Over 90% of the country is unspoiled mountainous landscapes. The serene lakes of Song K l and Issyk K l are some of the loveliest and most peaceful spots in Asia, surrounded by lush pastures favoured by herders, who come here in summer with their animals. The valleys of Jeti Oguz, Chong Kemin, Ala Archa and Altyn Arashan are equally stunning and perfect

### Turkmenistan



### OVERLANDING TURKMENISTAN - WHAT TO EXPECT

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, many of whom still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life. The rural Turkmen are a hospitable people whose culture and way of life has altered little in hundreds of years.

places to explore the phenomenal countryside.

### EXPLORE A NOMADIC WAY OF LIFE...

Kyrgyzstan is a welcoming country where many people still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life, dominated by animal herding and felt-making. What Kyrgyzstan lacks in settled history it makes up for in a wealth of nomadic traditions and is a mountain paradise perfect for outdoor exploration and wild camping.

In the unique capital of Ashgabat there are many beautiful marble palaces and gleaming golden domes. It is a strange modern city that has been extensively rebuilt in the years since independence, and its futuristic and outrageous public buildings are an extraordinary sight! Little is now left of the original Russian Imperial city that was destroyed by a massive earthquake in the 1940s.

### THE DARVASA GAS CRATER

One unusual attraction is the famous Darvasa Gas Crater, lying deep in the deserts of Turkmenistan. Initially the result of an industrial accident by Soviet gas prospectors, it is a huge burning crater that has been on fire for decades by being kept alight by the natural gas in the ground. It's a bewildering and mesmerising sight, especially after dark!

## Uzbekistan



Uzbekistan is a delightful country which contains many cultural and historical treasures. This is the land of the great Khanates and Sultanates, the kingdoms that controlled the towns of the [Silk Road](#) such as Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand.

The Uzbek capital is Tashkent, which started life as a little oasis at the hills of the Golestan mountains several thousand years ago and has grown into the colossal city that it is today. The city has a myriad of statues, museums and art galleries to explore.

### DISCOVER UZBEKISTAN'S HISTORICAL SILK ROAD CITIES

Uzbekistan is most famous for its incredible historical cities. [Samarkand](#) was once home of the

mighty warlore Timur, and home of the great Registan Square, where beautiful madrassas are loaded down with ornate majolica and azure mosaics. Bukhara perfectly captures the atmosphere of Central Asia before the Russian domination, and has many spectacular buildings such as 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 and bloody history is fascinating, and the walls that used to provide sanctuary for the travellers on the Silk Road are as intact as the old town inside.

### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM UZBEKISTAN?

Uzbekistan is covered mostly by the arid Kyzyl Kum desert in the central regions and by striking mountain ranges in the north. The music in Uzbekistan is similar to Persian classical music, and makes use of lutes, drums and jingles to create poetic love songs. This soundtrack adds to the endless reasons as to why Uzbekistan is an awe-inspiring country to visit.

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## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Beijing ( Mon 13 Jul )

**Border Information:** if joining in Beijing, you will most likely enter China at Beijing Capital International Airport (IATA code: PEK).

There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting. The rest of the day will be free to explore the incredible city of Beijing!

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Beijing before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Beijing.

In Beijing we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Hu Guo Si Hotel

#### Hu Guo Si Hotel

No 125 Hu Guo Si Street  
Xicheng District 100035  
Beijing  
China  
Tel - +86 10 6618 1113

#### Activity

Head out to see an acrobatic or martial arts

#### Approximate Cost

CNY 250



show in Beijing, always an incredible mix of athleticism and choreography

Discover all about the varied and interesting history of China at the National Museum, with its huge collection of over a million artifacts

Free

Explore the vast Temple of Heaven, once the site of an annual religious ceremony conducted by the Emperor to pray for a good harvest

CNY 10

Visit the beautiful Tibetan-style Lama Temple (Yonghe Temple) in Beijing

Free

See the iconic modern 'Bird's Nest' Stadium, the centrepiece of the 2008 Olympic Games

CNY 50

### About Beijing:

Beijing is the throbbing, bustling capital of China. First populated way back in the 11th Century BCE, Beijing has been the hub of China for three millennia and has evolved into the incredibly modern city that it is today. It controls the whole country and little goes on without Beijing's authority.

It's a great place to visit as a traveller, as there's a huge amount to see and do. Take a tour of the Forbidden City and learn about the history of the Ming Dynasty, or discover the wonders of the Summer Palace. With so much on offer we recommend you allowing yourself plenty of time in this amazing city, it's worth allowing yourself a few extra days here before or after a trip with us.

### Day 2: Beijing ( Tue 14 Jul )

Today we will head out on the Beijing metro to the city centre's famous Tiananmen Square, which we will walk through and then take a tour of the Forbidden City. We will then have a free afternoon to further explore the many sights, sounds and flavours of Beijing.

#### Activity

Guided visit to the Forbidden City in Beijing

#### Approximate Cost

Included in Kitty

### Day 3 to 4: Chengde ( Wed 15 Jul to Thu 16 Jul )

This morning we will start our journey with a drive to the city of Chengde.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours (please note that all drive times given



here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the Puning Temple and the famous Imperial Summer Resort.

In Chengde we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the beautiful Putuo Zongcheng Temple, modelled after the famous Potala Palace in Tibet CNY 80

Explore the incredible Imperial Summer Resort in Chengde, a vast park with a variety of gardens, pagodas, temples and palaces from various regions of China Included in Kitty

### About Chengde:

Chengde is located in Hubei Province, the heavily populated region that surrounds Beijing. Once a royal city, this 18th Century imperial resort town has plenty of historic monuments to boast about. The imperial family would have moved here during the hot summer months, because of the cool and refreshing mountain air.

There are many historical sites to explore, including the regal gardens (the largest in China), the Imperial Summer Villa and a profusion of temples. Many of the temples and monasteries have a Mongolian and Tibetan feel - this is largely because of the legacy of Emperor Qiong, who wanted to assimilate both regions into his empire.

In recent years, mirroring the city's history, Chengde has become a very popular weekend retreat for the wealthy of Beijing - and so it's home to some excellent restaurants.

## Day 5: Jinshanling ( Fri 17 Jul )

This morning we will have a short drive to one of the world's most incredible sights - the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall of China! We will have time this afternoon to thoroughly explore and walk along the Great Wall.

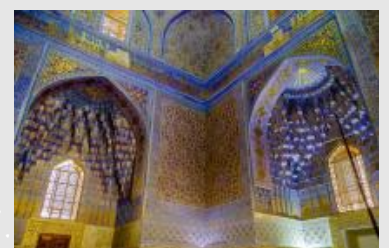
In Jinshanling we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 1-2 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Fully explore the awe-inspiring Great Wall of China at Jinshanling, one of the most Included in Kitty





spectacular stone sections of the wall

### About Jinshanling:

The Great Wall of China was built over several centuries to protect the historical northern borders of China from raids and invasions from nomadic group from the Eurasian Steppe. The earliest sections were built all the way back in the 5th Century BCE during the Warring States period, although little of this still remains.

The most famous and enduring sections of the Great Wall are the stone wall stretches in the northeast that were built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) - these are the iconic sections that snake over the mountains in a phenomenal feat of engineering. All in all, Ming walls measure a staggering 8,850 km long in total.

The Jinshanling section of the Great Wall is one of the most spectacular sections along the whole length, located in a beautiful mountainous area northeast of Beijing - it is over 10kms long, crosses 5 mountain passes, and contains 70 towers. Built from 1570 CE during the Ming Dynasty, some sections have been expertly restored to their original condition, while other parts are left in a natural eroded state as they approach Simatai (another famous section of the Wall to the east). It is an incredible place to explore on foot.

### Day 6 to 7: Datong ( Sat 18 Jul to Sun 19 Jul )

Today we will drive to the city of Datong in China's Shanxi province.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

On the following day we will head out of Datong in the truck on an included visit to the awe-inspiring Yungang Buddha Caves.

In Datong we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

#### Activity

#### Approximate Cost

2 nights to explore Datong's Hanging Monastery and the stunning Yungang Caves

Included in Kitty

Journey through the remarkable industrial heartland of the north, the powerhouse of modern China

CNY 60

See the beautiful and ornate Nine Dragon Screen, a screen of glazed tiles depicting nine multi-coloured interweaving dragons

CNY 10

Explore the phenomenal site of the Yungang Caves, a network of 252 caves containing over 51,000 incredibly crafted sculptures of Buddha from the 5th and 6th

Included in Kitty



centuries

### About Datong:

The historic city of Datong dates back nearly 2,500 years. The main attraction here is the Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage complex of 21 caves containing over 50,000 Buddhist statues, some of which are the oldest of this type in China. This is one of the most outstanding Buddhist grottoes in China and spans over 1,000 years of construction, starting back in the 5th Century CE - looking at the rock art you will be able to pick out influences from an amazing variety of different cultures, including Greek, Persian and Indian.

South of Datong is the phenomenal Hanging Monastery, a wooden monastery that is over 1,400 years old and beautifully located clinging to the edge of a cliff. The monastery has an awe-inspiring location, consists of over 40 different halls and is home to an impressive array of bronze, stone, clay and iron statues.

## Day 8 to 9: Wutai Shan ( Mon 20 Jul to Tue 21 Jul )

This morning we continue to the stunning mountainous area known as Wutai Shan, one of the holiest sites of Chinese Buddhism and a major centre of pilgrimage in the country. We will have an included visit to the incredible Hanging Monastery en route.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

On the following day we will have a full day to explore the area and visit its incredible array of temples and religious sites.

In Wutai Shan we will stay in a basic local hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the myriad of temples at Wutai Shan, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism	Included in Kitty
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### About Wutai Shan:

Wutai Shan is one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism, and Buddhists believe the area to be the earthly abode of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjushri. For a thousand years Wutai Shan has been a focus of pilgrimage for the Chinese, Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus alike. As host to over 53 sacred monasteries spread through the town and the surrounding mountains, Wutai Shan is home to many of China's most important monasteries and temples, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009.

## Day 10 to 11: Pingyao ( Wed 22 Jul to Thu 23 Jul )

We will then drive to China's best-preserved ancient walled town, Pingyao.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-5 hours.

We will stay for 2 nights in Pingyao, giving us plenty of time to explore this ancient town and surrounding sites such as the Mian Shan Mountain Resort and the Zhangbi Underground City.

In Pingyao we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Freely explore the old town of Pingyao, a well preserved walled city that offers a fantastic glimpse into 'Old China'	Included in Kitty
Visit the incredible Shuanglin Temple near Pingyao, with its 2000 colourful sculptures of various gods and warriors	CNY 25
Visit the 10th-century Zhenguo Temple, one of the oldest wooden buildings in China	CNY 25
Take a day trip to the photogenic Mian Shan Mountain Resort, and explore the incredible array of buildings and scenery there	CNY 160
Take a day trip out to the impressive Wang family compound and the Zhang Bi underground village near Pingyao	CNY 205

### About Pingyao:

Pingyao is an exceptionally well-preserved example of a traditional Han Chinese city, and was founded in the 14th Century CE. Its urban fabric shows the evolution of architectural styles and town planning in Imperial China over five centuries. Of special interest are the imposing buildings associated with banking, for which Pingyao was the major centre for the whole of China in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. It is a wonderful slice of 'old China' on our trip through an otherwise very modern area of the country.

## Day 12: Lijiashan ( Fri 24 Jul )

Today we continue our journey to visit the ancient village of Lijiashan, famed for settlement of cave dwellers and still home to more than 600 families. We will stop en route for an included visit to the Black Dragon Temple just outside of Lijiashan.

In Lijiashan we will stay in a cave room, run by a local family and set up for guests.

*Please note that some caves include a traditional 'Kang Stove bed'. The Kang bed is a hollow platform made from bricks that is used both as a bed and as a work area, these are common in remote villages in Northern China. In winter a coal fire can be lit under the bed, providing a huge amount of warmth day and night and it is very common for the*

*whole family to sleep on one large bed. This means there may be times that members of the group may have to share 1 large bed with others in the group.*

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit the beautiful and ornate Black Dragon temple near Lijiashan	Included in Kitty
Stay overnight in a local guesthouse built into a cave, in the cliff-side village of Lijiashan	Included in Kitty

#### **About Lijiashan:**

Lijiashan, located in China's Shanxi province, is famed for its cave houses - this remote 550-year-old village, hugging a hillside set back from the Yellow River, has hundreds of cave dwellings scaling 9 storeys. It makes for a wonderful and atmospheric stop on our route through northeastern China.

### **Day 13 to 14: Yan'an ( Sat 25 Jul to Sun 26 Jul )**

Today we make our way to the city of Yan'an.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

Yan'an is famous for being the ending point for those on the 'Long March', and became the CCP headquarters for a brief period. During our time here we have an included visit to the Revolutionary Museum and the CCP Headquarters site.

In Yan'an we will stay in a local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Visit the Revolution Museum and the Yangjialing Headquarters site, the former headquarters of Mao Tse Tung's Communist Party during the revolution	Included in Kitty

#### **About Yan'an:**

When Mao Tse Tung's diminished communist armies pitched up here at the end of the Long March (a retreat from the nationalist armies of Chiang Kai-Shek during the Chinese Civil War), it signalled the beginning of Yan'an's brief period in the sun. For 12 years, from 1935 to 1947, this backwater town was the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) headquarters. During our time here we will have a chance to step back into history as we explore the area and the CCP Museum located there.

### **Day 15: Xi'an ( Mon 27 Jul )**

Today we will drive to the amazing city of Xi'an, the ancient capital of

Shaanxi province and the end of the 'Silk Road'! On arrival we will have a free afternoon to explore the city of Xi'an, it's famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-6 hours.

### About Xi'an:

The imperial centre of China for 2,000 years, Xi'an is now a vibrant, modern city dotted with many interesting historical sites. Xi'an was the start of the famous ancient trading route of the Silk Road and the city is still surrounded by its original city walls which you can climb and walk or cycle along, a unique way to experience the city. For a different view, haul yourself to the top of the Bell or Drum Towers in the centre of the city. Home to many Hui people, an ethnic Muslim minority, the city also has a unique Islamic flavour, particularly in the streets and markets surrounding the Great Mosque, best explored by foot.

Thanks to Xi'an's long and colourful history, the city is full of beautiful temples, museums and interesting cultural and historic sites, the most famous of which are probably the ancient Terracotta Warriors. The collection of over 8,000 life-sized model warriors and 700 horses was discovered by farmers digging a well in 1974. Dating from the late 3rd Century BCE, they were built by Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, to protect his tomb in the afterlife.

## Day 16: Xi'an ( Tue 28 Jul )

This morning we head out of Xi'an on the truck to the site of the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, where we have an included visit and a guided tour. We will return to Xi'an for a free afternoon to further explore this diverse city.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Wander through the atmospheric Muslim Quarter and visit the Xi'an Great Mosque, the first mosque constructed in China	CNY 30
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Visit the mind-blowing Tomb of Emperor Jingdi of the Han Dynasty, containing 50,000 doll-sized terracotta figures	CNY 90
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Visit the ornate 14th-century Bell and Drum towers, which originally marked the sunrise and sunset	CNY 50
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Walk or cycle around the Ming Dynasty Xi'an City Wall, the largest city wall in the world	CNY 90
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Learn about the fascinating history of the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an at the Shaanxi History Museum, without doubt one of the finest museums in China CNY 30

Visit the impressive Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi'an's most famous landmark dating from the Tang and Ming Dynasties CNY 90

Visit the Forest of Stelae Museum, a collection of 3000 stone tablets of Chinese calligraphy that has been collected here since 1057 CNY 75

Explore the world-famous site of the Terracotta Warriors, an army of 8000 life-size figures built to protect the Emperor Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife Included in Kitty

Visit the huge former Tang Dynasty royal palace of Daming, and explore its vast parks and gardens Free

## Day 17: Xi'an ( Wed 29 Jul )

**Border Information:** if joining in Xi'an, you will most likely enter China at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport (IATA code: XIY).

Welcome to the amazing city of Xi'an, the ancient capital of Shaanxi province and the end of the 'Silk Road'! We will have a free day to explore the city, it's famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

There will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm - please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception with more information about this important meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Xi'an before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Xi'an.

In Xi'an we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Hotel for the night: Skytel Hotel

### **Skytel Hotel Xi'an**

No. 32 South Avenue (Nan Dajie)

Beilin District

Xi'an

Shaanxi Province

China

Tel - +86 29 8763 2222

## Activity Approximate Cost

Visit the ornate 14th-century Bell and Drum towers, which originally marked the sunrise and sunset CNY 50

Wander through the atmospheric Muslim Quarter and visit the Xi'an Great Mosque, the first mosque constructed in China CNY 30

Learn about the fascinating history of the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an at the Shaanxi History Museum, without doubt one of the finest museums in China CNY 30

Visit the mind-blowing Tomb of Emperor Jingdi of the Han Dynasty, containing 50,000 doll-sized terracotta figures CNY 90

Visit the Forest of Stelae Museum, a collection of 3000 stone tablets of Chinese calligraphy that has been collected here since 1057 CNY 75

Walk or cycle around the Ming Dynasty Xi'an City Wall, the largest city wall in the world CNY 90

Visit the impressive Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi'an's most famous landmark dating from the Tang and Ming Dynasties CNY 90

Visit the huge former Tang Dynasty royal palace of Daming, and explore its vast parks and gardens Free

## Day 18: Xi'an ( Thu 30 Jul )

This morning we head out of Xi'an on the truck to the site of the world-famous Terracotta Warriors, where we have an included visit and a guided tour.

We will return to Xi'an for the afternoon, where we'll have a free afternoon to further explore this incredible city.

## Activity Approximate Cost

Explore the world-famous site of the Terracotta Warriors, an army of 8000 life- Included in Kitty

size figures built to protect the Emperor  
Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife

## **Day 19 to 20: Pingliang ( Fri 31 Jul to Sat 01 Aug )**

Today we will drive to the town of Pingliang at the base of the Mount Kongtong, one of the holiest mountains in Chinese Taoism.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

On the following day we will have an included visit to Mount Kongtong, and will have the full day to explore the temples and walk and explore the pilgrimage routes on the mountain.

In Pingliang we will stay in a decent local hotel.

*Please note that if the group and leader prefer to split the drive between Turpan and Dunhuang over 2 days, there will only be 1 night in Pingliang and a half-day exploration of Mount Kongtong.*

### **Activity**

### **Approximate Cost**

Explore the stunningly beautiful Mt. Kongtong and its temples

Included in Kitty

### **About Pingliang:**

The town of Pingliang is the gateway to the Kongtong Mountain, an absolutely spectacular set of steep hills covered in temples. Kongtong is one of the most sacred sites in Taoism, and features the famous steep 'Stairway to Heaven' - the area is a wonderful place to explore on foot.

## **Day 21 to 23: Xiahe ( Sun 02 Aug to Tue 04 Aug )**

Today we set off to the enchanting Tibetan town of Xiahe where we spend the next 3 nights.

Estimated Drive Time - 9 -10 hours.

The next few days are free to explore this beautiful town and surrounding grasslands. We can take a guided visit to the Labrang Monastery where Tibetan monks can be seen doing their daily rituals and chants. There may also be a chance to go trekking, horse riding or exploring the surrounding grasslands, visiting Tibetan families and perhaps trying the local Yak butter tea.



In Xiahe we will stay in a local Tibetan-owned hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
3 night detour to the Tibetan town of Xiahe, one of the main pilgrimage sites for Tibetan Buddhists	Included in Kitty
Climb up onto the lower slopes of the remote Tibetan Plateau	Free
Take a day trip up into the Sangke or Ganjia grasslands of the lower Tibetan Plateau surrounding Xiahe	CNY 400

#### **About Xiahe:**

The town of Xiahe, on the lower Tibetan Plateau, is frequently described as one of the most enchanting places to visit in China - and it certainly has a wonderful tranquil atmosphere and a beautiful setting.

Many Tibetans come here on pilgrimage to the stunning Labrang Monastery - and the combination of the many monasteries, saffron-robed monks, fluttering prayer flags and spectacular scenery make this small town feel like a slice of the real Tibet as well. Xiahe is right up on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau, and the population here is over 45% Tibetan.

### **Day 24: Liujiaxia, Bingling Si ( Wed 05 Aug )**

Today we will leave Xiahe behind us to reach the small city of Liujiaxia. We will have an included visit to the incredible Bingling Si Buddha Caves en route.

In Liujiaxia we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time: 4-5 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
See the vast Buddha statue and the outstanding Buddhist cave sculptures at the fabulous Bingling Si gorge	Included in Kitty

#### **About Bingling Si:**

Bingling Si is a fabulous Buddhist grotto site along the Yellow River - the site is full of carvings and Buddhist artwork, including the centrepiece Maitreya Buddha statue, a 27m-tall statue dug into the cliff. The grottoes began construction in 420 CE and were added to continuously until the 15th Century. There are over 180 small caves and nearly 700 statues on the site (not all of which are open to the public), that are well preserved despite centuries of damage from erosion and earthquakes.

## Day 25: Zhangye ( Thu 06 Aug )

Today we will have a full day's drive towards Zhangye. This evening we will find a place to camp in the hills surrounding Zhangye.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-9 hours.

### About Zhangye:

Zhangye is famous for the phenomenal Zhangye Danxia rock formations - created by the same tectonic movement that created the Himalayas, the landscape is a rainbow of different coloured rocks, the result of deposits of sandstone and minerals over the last 24 million years. The layer cake of coloured rocks has been sculpted by erosion, producing hills and ravines in the most remarkable patterns!

## Day 26: Zhangye, Jiayuguan ( Fri 07 Aug )

Today we will have a short drive to the incredible Zhangye Danxia Rainbow Mountains - we will spend some time exploring the beautiful scenery, before continuing our drive on to Jiayuguan where, tomorrow, we will have an included visit to the Jiayuguan Fort - the most western point of the Great Wall of China. Please note that the Great Wall here is adobe, unlike the more famous stone sections further east.

We will camp near an adobe section of the Great Wall near Jiayuguan.

Estimated Drive Time: 5-6 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Journey down the Gansu Corridor to Jiayuguan Fort, our first stop at the Great Wall

Included in Kitty

Explore the incredible and colourful natural phenomenon of the Zhangye Danxia Rainbow Mountains

Included in Kitty

### About Jiayuguan:

The fort at Jiayuguan marks the far western end of the Great Wall of China - this was one of the first parts of the Great Wall to be built by the Ming Dynasty in 1372 CE, located at a vital pass on the ancient Silk Road. The fort was at a strategically vital position for defence against potential attacks from the northwest, and became an important melting pot of cultures between China and the Silk Road. This older section of the Great Wall is adobe, unlike the stone sections in the east of the country. The fort here is very impressive and remarkably well preserved.

## Day 27 to 28: Dunhuang ( Sat 08 Aug to Sun 09 Aug )

Today we will continue our journey westwards to reach the city of Dunhuang.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

On the following day we will have an included visit to the awe-inspiring Mogao Buddha Caves in the morning. We will then have a free afternoon to explore this amazing town and its surroundings - there are possibilities for camel rides along the sand dunes and bicycle rides out to the nearby White Goose Pagoda!

In Dunhuang we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Stopover and time to explore historic Dunhuang	CNY 20
Guided tour of the Mogao caves, Dunhuang	Included in Kitty
Take a camel ride at Crescent Moon Lake.	CNY 240

#### **About Dunhuang:**

Dunhuang is one of the largest and historically most important oasis trading towns in Gansu province. Dunhuang is an oasis in an otherwise barren desert, surrounded by sand dunes and mountains - the setting is spectacular and a good enough reason to travel here alone.

However most visitors make the long journey to Dunhuang to see the fantastic ancient Buddhist art in the nearby Mogao Caves - an extraordinary site even by Chinese standards, the caves contain some of the finest examples of Buddhist art spanning a period of 1,000 years between the 4th and 14th Centuries CE. Re-discovered in the early 20th Century, the site is one of the most celebrated Buddhist sites in China, and full of thousands of ancient Buddha images!

#### **Day 29 to 30: Turpan ( Mon 10 Aug to Tue 11 Aug )**

Today we will have an early start and a big drive to the oasis town of Turpan.

Estimated Drive Time: 10-13 hours.

*Please note that due to the political tension in Western China there are many police checkpoints that we must go through to show our passports in the Xinjiang province. Sometimes it may be preferred by the group and the leader to split this drive over 2 days, finding a local hotel in between to break up the travel day.*

On the following day we will have a free day to explore the surrounding sites including the famous Jiaohe ruins.

In Turpan we will stay in a local hotel.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Exploration of the oasis and the Jiaohe	Included in Kitty

ruins at Turpan

Learn about the Karez water system, the ingenious method of irrigating the area that was developed by the Han Dynasty and allowed Turpan to flourish as an oasis town

Included in Kitty

See the Emin Minaret, a beautiful Uighur mosque built in the 18th century which is the tallest minaret in China

CNY 30

See the striking red sandstone landscape of the Flaming Mountains near Turpan

Included in Kitty

Explore the ancient oasis city of Gaochang, once a bustling trading trading centre along the Silk Road

CNY 40

### About Turpan:

East of Ürümqi lies one of the hottest places on Earth, the Turpan Basin. Nestling between the Northern and the Southern Tian Shan Mountains, this dry dust-bowl is the lowest basin in China.

The oasis town of Turpan was crucial to the traders on the Silk Road, providing a staging post and a market place for the traders to exchange goods and to re-equip their caravans. Although Turpan is the hottest place in China, the lack of humidity makes the atmosphere pretty bearable. The town is a very relaxed, tranquil place, and has some fascinating irrigation channels which show how this dry area has been collecting water for hundreds of years, as well as the nearby 2000-year old fortress of Jiaohe.

## Day 31 to 32: Heavenly Lake, Urumqi ( Wed 12 Aug to Thu 13 Aug )

Today we will continue on to Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province.

Estimated Drive Time: 4-5 hours.

We will stay here for 2 nights on the 2nd day we will have an included visit to Heavenly Lake to enjoy the incredible scenery in the Tian Shan Mountains and walk around the lake.

In Urumqi we will stay in a local hotel.

### About Heavenly Lake:

Ürümqi is the capital of the western province of Xinjiang, and just south of one of the region's most beautiful spots - the aptly-named Heavenly Lake. This is a dazzling deep blue lake set in the dry mountains, providing some excellent walking and boating opportunities.

## Day 33 to 34: Bayanbulak, Aksu ( Fri 14 Aug to Sat 15 Aug )

Today our journey continues westwards through the Taklamakan Desert. Our crossing of the desert usually takes 3 days/2 nights, and we plan to stay in local hotels near Korla or Bayanbulak on our first night and Aksu on our second.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours each day.

## Day 35 to 37: Kashgar ( Sun 16 Aug to Tue 18 Aug )

Today we complete our journey to the far west of China, arriving in Kashgar, once one of the ancient trading posts on the Silk Route!

Estimated Drive Time - 7-9 hours.

We will spend 3 nights in Kashgar, during which time there will be lots of opportunity to explore the city and its central Id Kah Mosque. We will also have an included visit to the animal market just outside of town, and then the famous Kashgar Sunday Bazaar.

In Kashgar we will stay in a hotel with good facilities.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore Kashgar's Sunday market and Animal market.

Included in Kitty

Visit the Id Kah Mosque, the finest example of Islamic architecture in Kashgar and the centre of religious life in the city

CNY 45

Discover the history of the ancient Silk Road at Kashgar's Silk Road Museum

CNY 45

Visit the mausoleum of the 17th-century religious leader Afaq Khoja, considered the holiest site in Xinjiang Province

CNY 30

### About Kashgar:

Kashgar is a remote western outpost in the Uighur province of Xinjiang - and it has managed to keep an exotic atmosphere under the ubiquitous march of Chinese modernity. This is mainly due to the ethnic mix of Uighurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, and is amply portrayed throughout the old town, with blacksmiths, silversmiths, cobblers and others working in ways that have not changed for hundreds of years.

The highlight of the week for the local populous and for the visitor is the massive Sunday market. 50,000 people migrate for the day into the town. This is a must see for the visitor, as it exemplifies the daily life of the indigenous people - the noise, smells, the animals, the traders, the junk, cloths, rugs, jewellery, tapes and ghetto blasters. Horses, cows,

donkeys, sheep and goats all awaiting the inevitable sale.

## Day 38: Kashgar ( Wed 19 Aug )

For everyone that is continuing with us to Kyrgyzstan, there will be quick pre-departure meeting in the early morning in order to explain the next 6 days until Bishkek, and your leader will collect the kitty for this linking section.

In the afternoon we will do an included visit to Shiptons Arch - the largest natural arch in the world!

Tonight we will stay in a good quality local hotel

Hotel for the night: Seman Hotel

### Seman Hotel

37 Kash City

Seman Road

Kashgar

Xinjiang Province

China

Tel - +86 998 255 2129

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore Kashgar's Sunday market and Animal market.

Included in Kitty

Hike up to Shiptons Arch - the largest natural arch in the world.

Included in Kitty

## Day 39 to 40: Tash Rabat ( Thu 20 Aug to Fri 21 Aug )

**Border Information:** Exit China at Torugart, enter Kyrgyzstan at Torugart.

Today we will have a full day drive over the 3752m Torugart Pass into the magical mountain kingdom of Kyrgyzstan! We will head just over the border to Tash Rabat, once a key staging post on the Silk Road close to the Kyrgyzstan-China border. During our time here we will visit an ancient caravanserai and have some time to explore the surrounding area.

In Tash Rabat we will wild camp. In cold weather (or if simply the group prefers and there is availability), we may choose to stay in local nomadic yurts that are set up for guests near the caravanserai, sleeping 8-10 people per yurt.

We will spend 2 nights in Tash Rabat. On the second day we will have time to explore the local area.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the ancient Silk Road caravanserai at Tash Rabat, close to the Kyrgyzstan-China border

Included in Kitty

Cross into Kyrgyzstan via the stunning and remote Torugart Pass in the Tian Shan Mountains

Included in Kitty

### About Tash Rabat:

Tash Rabat is well-preserved stone caravanserai dating from the 15th Century CE - an inn that accommodated travellers and merchants along the Silk Road. Although today the structure lies in ruins, its location near the Torugart Pass into China is absolutely spectacular, and it makes for an excellent and atmospheric stop.

## Day 41: Kochkor ( Sat 22 Aug )

Today we drive to the small village of Kochkor, where we stay in local family-run guesthouses and enjoy traditional Kyrgyz hospitality!

Whilst here we will visit a small museum and women's felt making cooperative that produces 'shyrdaks', the felt carpets for which Kyrgyzstan is renowned. We may also have the opportunity here to see some excellent local musicians playing traditional Kyrgyz folk music and to see how a yurt is put up!

In Kochkor we will stay in family-run guesthouses, accommodating up to 8 guests in each home.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

*Please note that if nobody from this group is leaving in Bishkek, we may choose to stay instead in a guesthouse in the small town of Naryn (a 2-3 hour drive from Tash Rabat). This is so that we don't repeat Kochkor unnecessarily on the next section and can have more time to explore the area of Tash Rabat this morning.*

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Overnight homestay at a traditional rural Kyrgyz village

Included in Kitty

See the traditional felt workshops or Kochkor and learn about how Kyrgyz carpets and hats are typically made here

Included in Kitty

Visit a folklore demonstration near Kockhor where you can learn all about the handicrafts of the area, see a fantastic outdoor concert of traditional music and help to erect a yurt!

KGS 1000

### About Kochkor:

Kochkor is a sleepy little Kyrgyz village and looks very much like the paintings of traditional Kyrgyz life seen in various museums and art galleries throughout the country.

Here we will stay with a traditional Kyrgyz family, living with them and finding out about their daily life, food and family patterns. The Kyrgyz have embraced Responsible Tourism and actively encourage travellers to stay in the homes of local people.

There is an excellent local animal market and a traditional felt making enterprise which we usually visit. Here they make a variety of the different felts used for making yurts, rugs, carpets and souvenirs.

## **Day 42: Bishkek ( Sun 23 Aug )**

Today we have a short drive to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. The remainder of the day is free to explore the relaxed and atmospheric city.

In Bishkek we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours (from Kochkor).

### **About Bishkek:**

Bishkek is the relaxed capital of Kyrgyzstan, and it has a pleasant laid-back atmosphere. The city centres around Ala-too Square, previously known as Lenin's Square under the previous Soviet regime. Lenin used to stand in his concrete overcoat in the middle of the square, proudly gesturing towards the mountains.

A pleasant place to watch the world go by is Dubovy (Oak) Park, where you'll find a few open air cafes, a perfect spot to sit and have a drink and soak up the atmosphere. The centuries-old oaks here and all along Freedom Avenue make Bishkek one of the greenest cities in Central Asia.

## **Day 43: Bishkek ( Mon 24 Aug )**

**Border Information:** if joining in Bishkek, you will most likely enter Kyrgyzstan at Bishkek Manas International Airport (IATA code: FRU).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting. Your leader will need to carefully check your visas at this initial meeting.

The rest of the day is free for you to explore this relaxed and atmospheric city.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Bishkek before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Bishkek.

In Bishkek we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.



*\*Important note - do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details.\**

*\*Another important note - please be aware that all itineraries in Kyrgyzstan are highly weather-dependent. The itinerary described in these notes are a statement of best intention, but we must approach each trip in Kyrgyzstan with a large degree of flexibility, as our leaders and local guides will have to 'play things by ear' according to the local conditions and weather. In low season certain routes become impossible and it may become far too cold to camp - in all cases there are fantastic and well-tried alternatives in place which means we can always run an excellent and comprehensive trip here, but please do not treat the exact details of the itinerary listed here as gospel - thanks for your understanding!\**

Hotel for the night: Hotel Asia Mountains

**Hotel Asia Mountains (Отель Горы Азии)**

1a Lineinaja St (Улица Линейная 1А, (на пересечении с улицой Гоголя))

Bishkek 720021

Kyrgyzstan

Tel - +996 312 690 235 or +996 312 690 234

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**

Begin our journey in picturesque Bishkek

Free

Freely explore the vast Osh Bazaar, Bishkek's largest market

Free

Explore Bishkek's past at the State Historical Museum on Ala-Too Square

KGS 150

**Day 44 to 45: Ala Archa, Chong Kemin Valley ( Tue 25 Aug to Wed 26 Aug )**

The next 2 days will need to be fairly flexible. Many of the group will apply for Uzbekistan visas in Bishkek. However, the Uzbek Embassy opening times will often vary and therefore our itinerary will need to remain flexible over the next 2 days to accommodate this.

As a general guide, we will most likely spend our first night camping in stunning mountainous Ala Archa National Park near to Bishkek. We will then return to Bishkek on the following day in order to submit our visa applications. Once this process is complete we will continue to Chong Kemin National Park, where we will have free time to explore and hike in this beautiful area, or to get involved in an optional white water rafting excursion if time allows.

In Chong Kemin and Ala Archa we will wild camp. If it is too cold or simply preferred by the group, we may choose to camp in the grounds of a guesthouse in Ashu, a village in the Chong Kemin valley, where

there could be the possibility to upgrade to rooms.

Estimated Drive Times - 3-5 hours each day (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Get off the beaten track with 3 nights wild camping and a leisurely overland journey through the stunning mountains and National Parks of Kyrgyzstan	Included in Kitty
Explore the beautiful Chong Kemin valley on horseback	KGS 300
Head out on a white-water rafting adventure through the stunning Chong Kemin valley	KGS 1800
Walk around the incredible scenery of the Chong Kemin valley	Free
Wild camping and hiking in the beauty of Ala Archa Gorge	Free

#### **About Ala Archa:**

Ala Archa means "bright juniper", and indeed there are juniper bushes growing all through this beautiful gorge. The alpine area is stunning, and is abundant with wild flowers, bubbling mountain streams, glaciers and vast mountain panoramas. The gorge itself is 35kms long, and the surrounding mountains are massive and home to some of the largest glaciers in all of Kyrgyzstan. The park is also an important habitat for all kinds of wildlife, including marmots, badgers, hares, foxes, wolves, lynx, and wild goats.

#### **About Chong Kemin Valley:**

The Chong Kemin Valley lies within the Tian Shan mountain range separating Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The towering peaks of the Tian Shan range reach above 7,000m along their rugged run towards China. This spectacular valley is famed for its natural beauty, abundant wildlife and rich, varied flora. The valley offers several trekking possibilities along the Chong Kemin River, and recently white water rafting has become a popular activity for visitors in the area - exploring this stunning valley on horseback is also a great option.

## Day 46: Karakol, Cholpon Ata ( Thu 27 Aug )

Today we will drive to the northern shore of Lake Issyk K l and visit the ancient petroglyphs at Cholpon Ata. We will then continue to the Russian-style town of Karakol, where we will have a free evening to explore and relax!

In Karakol we will stay in a decent local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Tourist time: pedalos, sand, sun. On Lake Issyk-Kul, it's a time warp

Included in Kitty

### About Karakol:

Originally a Russian military outpost built in 1869, Karakol quickly grew in the 19th Century as explorers arrived to map the mountains and valleys of the area, and Chinese Muslims fled warfare in China. For many years the town was named Przhivalsk, in honour of a Russian explorer who died there in the 1880s, but has been known as Karakol since independence.

Karakol is a picturesque town surrounded by orchards and mountains, with a delightful Russian church and gracious colonial houses on tree-lined streets sloping up towards glaciers and pine forests.

### About Cholpon Ata:

Issyk K l Lake is one of the biggest natural water reservoirs in the world, at 170kms long and 70kms wide. Issyk K l means "warm lake" in the local language, and a combination of extreme depth, thermal activity and mild salinity means the lake never freezes.

On the shores of the lake is the small town of Cholpon Ata, a favourite holiday spot with the locals. The area has a number of health resorts and spas and there are also some interesting rock inscriptions and petroglyphs dating back to 500 BCE close nearby.

## Day 47 to 48: Jetti Oguz Valley ( Fri 28 Aug to Sat 29 Aug )

Today we drive up into the mountains to the alpine trekking region of Jetti Oguz.

The next day we will have a free day to hike in the incredible scenery here, or take an optional horse ride with some of the local nomads!

In Jetti Oguz we will camp close to a local family yurt.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

*Please note that on trips in the low season we may not be able to camp in Jetti Oguz due to low temperatures. If this is the case, we will take a stunning and incredible drive up a mountain in a Russian 4x4 truck to Altyn Arashan, a hot spring development in a stunning alpine setting, staying in dormitory accommodation. We will then stay for 1 night in a*

local hotel at the base of Jeti Oguz Valley (allowing time for some day walks).

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Trek into the wilds of the Jeti-Oghuz Gorge on the edge of the Tian Shan mountains	Included in Kitty
Explore the incredible mountain landscapes of the Jeti Oguz Valley by horseback	KGS 800

### **About Jeti Oguz Valley:**

Seven spectacular red sandstone cliffs stand guard over the entrance to the Jeti Oguz Valley. Local tradition says that the cliffs were once wild bulls, immobilised by the gods to stop them terrorising local yurt dwellers. The base of this stunning canyon lies on the northern slopes of the Terskei Ala-Too range, surrounded by a broad valley and majestic snow-capped mountains.

The valley is a fantastic place for camping and hiking - by exploring the valleys and canyon by foot you'll be able to admire the unusual rock formations and alpine peaks.

### **Day 49: Kochkor ( Sun 30 Aug )**

Today we drive to the small village of Kochkor, where we stay in local family-run guesthouses and enjoy traditional Kyrgyz hospitality! En route we will have an included demonstration from a local 'eagle hunter'.

Whilst here we will visit a small museum and women's felt making cooperative that produces 'shyrdaks', the felt carpets for which Kyrgyzstan is renowned. We may also have the opportunity here to see some excellent local musicians playing traditional Kyrgyz folk music and to see how a yurt is put up!

In Kochkor we will stay in family-run guesthouses, accommodating up to 8 guests in each home.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Overnight homestay at a traditional rural Kyrgyz village	Included in Kitty
See the traditional felt workshops or Kochkor and learn about how Kyrgyz carpets and hats are typically made here	Included in Kitty
Visit a folklore demonstration near Kochkor where you can learn all about the handicrafts of the area, see a fantastic	KGS 1000

outdoor concert of traditional music and help to erect a yurt!

See an incredible demonstration from a traditional eagle hunter near Kochkor Included in Kitty

## **Day 50 to 51: Song Köl Lake ( Mon 31 Aug to Tue 01 Sep )**

Today we will drive to the incredible Song Köl Lake, where we will spend the next two nights.

We will have free time here to explore the area, and to enjoy some optional activities including hiking or horse-riding!

At Song Köl we will stay in traditional felt yurts.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-7 hours.

*Please note that trips during the low season will not be able to visit Song Köl Lake, as temperatures will be below freezing, the road will be snowed over, and there will be no yurts to stay in! Instead we will likely stay in yurts on the southern shore of Lake Issyk Köl.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Experience the daily life of the Kyrgyz mountain shepherds.	Included in Kitty

### **About Song Köl Lake:**

Song Köl lake is one of the most spectacular spots in central Kyrgyzstan. All around the lake are lush pastures favoured by local nomadic herders, who come here in the summer with their animals.

On our overland trips we spend a couple of days staying in traditional felt yurts, learning about the local culture and traditions. We might get to see the local men play a game of "Ulak-Tartys" (goat polo) or have a chance to ride out with the shepherds on their small hardy ponies, or you might prefer to explore the surrounding area on foot and trek in the nearby hills.

Song Köl really is a sublime and unique spot, it is a truly magical place where you are guaranteed to have travel experiences that you will never forget.

## **Day 52 to 54: Kyrgyz Fergana Valley ( Wed 02 Sep to Fri 04 Sep )**

We will spend the next 3 days overlanding through the stunning and remote Kyrgyz Fergana Valley, stopping often to admire the views and perhaps take some impromptu hikes in the hills and countryside.

During these days we plan to wild camp en route. Please note that trips running in low season (May to mid-June and October to November), we

may not be able to camp if temperatures are too low, in which case we will stay in local guesthouses along the route instead.

Estimated Drive Times - 4-8 hours each day.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Get off the beaten track with 3 nights wild camping and a leisurely overland journey through the stunning mountains and National Parks of Kyrgyzstan

Included in Kitty

## Day 55: Arslanbob ( Sat 05 Sep )

Today we will complete our drive to Arslanbob in Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley - if we have had a slow journey in the previous days with lots of stops, we may choose to stay in the closer town of Jalalabad instead.

In Arslanbob we will stay overnight in a local family-run guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

## Day 56: Fergana Valley, Fergana City ( Sun 06 Sep )

**Border information:** Exit Kyrgyzstan at Dustlik, enter Uzbekistan at Andijon.

Today we will have a full day's drive across the Uzbek border to the eastern city of Fergana.

In Fergana we will stay in a basic local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the impressive 19th-century Juma Mosque in Kokand in the stunning Fergana Valley

UZS 17500

See the silk-weavers of the Fergana Valley at the Yodgorlik Silk Factory

Included in Kitty

### About Fergana Valley:

A stunning corner of Uzbekistan dominated by the rolling mountains near the Kamchik Pass, the Fergana Valley is one of the most scenic drives on our route though Central Asia. The Palace of Khudayar Khan is an ornate palace from the 1870s built by the last leader of the Kokand Khanate.

**About Fergana City:** Similar to the Uzbek capital Tashkent, Fergana is a modern city, far-removed from the ancient Silk Road cities of Bukhara

and Samarkand. The town is located in the Fergana Valley, a broad bowl thousands of kilometres wide surrounded by far off mountain peaks. Nearly 90% of people who live here are indigenous Uzbek's and the communities here are typically very welcoming and hospitable. A very fertile area, the land is highly cultivated and used to produce fruit and vegetables and cotton. The textile industry thrives here and there are some exceptional craftspeople weaving beautiful fabrics. It may be possible for you to visit a local factory or workshop where you will be able to see how silk and other fabrics are still hand-woven and dyed here.

## Day 57: Tashkent ( Mon 07 Sep )

This morning we travel in local transport to Kokand, where we will have the opportunity to visit the Khudayar Khan's Palace and the nearby Margilan Silk Factory before completing the journey over the Kamchik Pass to Tashkent, the Uzbek capital.

The truck must pass over the Kamchik Pass without passengers and will rejoin us this evening in Tashkent.

In Tashkent we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### About Tashkent:

Whilst the historic cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva still retain much of the atmosphere of the ancient Khanates, Tashkent is very definitely a 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.

## Day 58: Tashkent ( Tue 08 Sep )

**Border Information:** if joining in Tashkent, you will most likely enter Uzbekistan at Tashkent International Airport (IATA code: TAS).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting. Your leader will need to carefully check your visas at this initial meeting.

We will then have a free afternoon to explore the Uzbek capital of Tashkent.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Tashkent before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Tashkent.

In Tashkent we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

*\*Important note - any tobacco products are practically illegal in Turkmenistan, so please do not bring them or use them in*

*Turkmenistan. Also please do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details.\**

Hotel for the night: Uzbekistan Hotel  
**Uzbekistan Hotel**  
45 Mirzamakhmud Musakhaov Street  
Tashkent  
Uzbekistan  
Tel - +998711131111

Activity	Approximate Cost
Explore urbane Tashkent and experience a surreal cabaret dinner	Free
Visit the nightclubs and Imperial Russian-style cabaret restaurants of Tashkent	Free
Visit the religious centre of Tashkent at Hast Imam Square and see the Uthman Koran, believed to be the world's oldest extant copy of the Koran	USD 5

## Day 59: Samarkand ( Wed 09 Sep )

Today our journey begins with a drive to the fascinating ancient city of Samarkand, where we will stay for the next 3 nights.

In Samarkand we will stay in a good hotel on the outskirts of town.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

### About Samarkand:

A city brimming with history, Samarkand became famous in the 14th Century CE as the birthplace of the warlord Timur and the capital of his Sultanate. Thanks to its central location along the Silk Road, 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 today.

Samarkand is perhaps the most romantic and evocative of the Silk Road cities, and is crowned by the decorative domes and minarets of the many beautiful buildings here. The must-sees include the iconic Registan Square (the central focus of the city and home to a



group of impressively decorated madrassas), Guri Amir and the Shah-i-Zinda mausoleum.

## Day 60 to 61: Samarkand ( Thu 10 Sep to Fri 11 Sep )

Today we will have a guided tour of the incredible historic city of Samarkand and the surrounding area, including the Registan, Ulug Beg Observatory, Bibi-Khanym Mosque and Shah-I-Zinda.

On our second day, we will have a free day to further explore the beautiful city and its surroundings.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Learn about the area's scientific heritage with a visit to the 15th-century Ulug Beg Observatory, once the finest observatory in the Islamic world

Included in Kitty

Visit the Guri-Amir Mausoleum, the final resting place of the Turko-Mongol conqueror Timur

Included in Kitty

Explore the stunning plaza of The Registan, a world-famous and iconic symbol of Central Asia

Included in Kitty

Visit to Shakhrisabz city

USD 20

Discover the ruins of the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, once one of the largest mosques in the world and the jewel in Timur's empire

Included in Kitty

See the beautiful and moving ancient mausoleum of Shah-I-Zinda

Included in Kitty

Wander through the markets and carpet vendors of Samarkand, and marvel at the intricate craftsmanship of the local carpet weavers

Free

## Day 62: Nurata ( Sat 12 Sep )

Today we will drive into the Kyzylkhum Desert near the town of Nurata. In the afternoon we will have the opportunity to take a swim in Lake Ajdar Kul and head out on an optional camel ride into the desert!

In the Kyzylkhum Desert we will stay in a desert yurt camp.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
Overnight in the Kyzylkum Desert staying in yurts.	Included in Kitty
Take a short camel ride around the sand dunes of the Kyzylkum Desert	UZS 5000

## **Day 63: Bukhara ( Sun 13 Sep )**

Today we will drive to the beautiful city of Bukhara, where we will spend the next 3 nights. Our drive will take us via the desert town of Nurata, which we will have a brief stop.

In Bukhara we will stay in a comfortable local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-6 hours.

### **About Bukhara:**

Bukhara is an atmospheric city with an incredible history and a wonderful heritage - exploring the streets, you really 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. Many of the buildings here are spectacular and very well-preserved, particularly the Ark Fortress, Ismail Samanid Mausoleum and the famous Kalyan Minaret (also known as the Death Tower). The government has invested a considerable amount of money into the city in order to preserve the architecture here.

## **Day 64 to 65: Bukhara ( Mon 14 Sep to Tue 15 Sep )**

Today we will have a guided tour of Bukhara and the surrounding area, including the Ismail Samani Mausoleum, Kalon Mosque, Zindon Prison and the Ark Fortress.

On our second day here, we will have a free day to further explore this incredible historic city and its surroundings.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approximate Cost</b>
See the Indian-style Char Minar Minarets, four towers nestled in a maze of alleyways in downtown Bukhara	Free
Visit the gruesome museum at the old prison of Zindon	UZS 4500
Explore the city's oldest Islamic monument, the 10th-century mausoleum of Ismail	Included in Kitty

Samanid, the founder of the Samanid Dynasty

Discover the ruins of the ancient 5th-century fortress of the Bukhara Ark      Included in Kitty

Explore the colossal Kalon Mosque and Minaret, which has survived without restoration for 850 years and impressed Genghis Khan so much that he ordered the building to be spared      Included in Kitty

Visit the magnificent 16th-century architectural ensemble surrounding the Lyab-i Hauz ponds, once the city's principal source of water      Included in Kitty

Watch an entertaining evening puppet show, featuring many local Uzbek and Tajik poems and songs      USD 5

## Day 66 to 67: Khiva ( Wed 16 Sep to Thu 17 Sep )

Today we have a full day drive to the incredible historic town of Khiva.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

On the next day, we have a guided tour of the ancient city of Khiva during the morning. In the afternoon we will have plenty of free time to further explore this wonderfully preserved Khanate town.

In Khiva we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the beautiful turquoise Kalta Minor Minaret, one of the iconic symbols of Khiva      Included in Kitty

Visit the Mohammed Rakhim Khan Madrassa, a museum dedicated to the Khan that surrendered to the Russians in 1873      Included in Kitty

Explore the incredibly photogenic blue palace of Tash Khovli in Khiva      Included in Kitty

Learn all about the Khoezm culture and handicrafts at the Islam Hodja Madrassa, Khiva's newest monument      Included in Kitty

Explore the incredible Juma Mosque and the 12th century fortress of the Kukhna Ark      Included in Kitty

Visit the mausoleum of Pahlavon Mohammed, the legendary 14th-century poet, philosopher, wrestler, and patron saint of Khiva  
Included in Kitty

### About Khiva:

The small historic town of Khiva in Uzbekistan was once the capital of the Khwarezmid Empire, one of Central Asia's most powerful states in the 12th Century CE until they were invaded by Genghis Khan in 1220 CE. Khiva once again rose to prominence as the centre of the Khanate of Khiva between 1500 CE and 1924, when the area 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 Road 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 and Juma Mosque, Pakhlovan Mahmud Mausoleum and Islam Hodja Madrassa.

## Day 68: Kunye Urgench ( Fri 18 Sep )

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

This morning we will drive across the border into Turkmenistan, visit the markets in the border town of Dashoguz, and explore the Kunye Urgench ruins towards the end of the day.

We will wild camp in the deserts near Kunye Urgench tonight.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Overland into the green Oxus Valley to the ancient ruined city of Kunye Urgench  
Included in Kitty

### About Kunye Urgench:

Kunye Urgench is one of Turkmenistan's most important historic sites, and was once a major city along the Silk Road. Situated on the shores of the Amu Daria River, the area has been settled since the 5th-Century BCE and came to prominence under the rule of the Persian Khwarezem Empire in the 11th-Century CE. The city managed to flourish even after Genghis Khan's invasion of 1221, only being finally destroyed and abandoned after an attack by the warlord Timur in 1373.

Timur did a very thorough job in demolishing the city, there are still plenty of old ruined buildings from the 11th-14th centuries dotted around, including a mosque, mausoleum and the towering 60-metre-high Kutlug-Timur minaret, the highest in Central Asia.

## Day 69: Darvaza ( Sat 19 Sep )

Today we continue south through the Karakum Desert. We will have an included side trip to the amazing flaming Darvaza Gas Crater (also known as the 'Door to Hell!').

We will wild camp in the deserts near Darvaza Crater tonight.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-7 hours.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

See the bizarre and incredible burning gas crater at Darvaza, popularly known as the 'Door to Hell'

Included in Kitty

### About Darvaza:

Darvaza is a tiny settlement in the Karakum Desert of Turkmenistan, which is the location of one of the world's more unusual highlights - the flaming Darvasa Gas Crater, sometimes dramatically called 'The Door to Hell'. The crater formed as a result of an industrial accident - Soviet oil prospectors started drilling in 1971 expecting to find oil, and when only gas was found underneath the ground collapsed to form the crater. Worried about the gas released into the air, they deliberately set the crater on fire to burn off the excess, expecting this to only last a few weeks - however the natural gas supply turned out to be much more plentiful, and it's been burning away ever since!

The crater is truly a breathtaking sight, especially at night - it's about the size of a football pitch and ablaze with fire, truly looking like the entrance to the underworld!

## Day 70: Ashgabat ( Sun 20 Sep )

Today we will complete our drive to the interesting capital of Ashgabat, usually arriving mid-afternoon.

In Ashgabat we will stay in a decent quality local hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 5-6 hours.

### About Ashgabat:

Ashgabat is a unique modern city that has been extensively rebuilt since the country gained independence in 1991. Little is left of the original Russian Imperial city as most of it was destroyed in a massive earthquake in 1948, and today the city centre is a bizarre mix of futuristic and outrageous public buildings that are an extraordinary sight - these include many ornate marble buildings and extravagant golden statues of the president.

Ashgabat's Sunday Market is famous along the whole Silk Road - 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 71: Ashgabat ( Mon 21 Sep )

Today we will have an included tour of the city of Ashgabat using local minibuses. The afternoon will be free to freely explore Ashgabat and its museums.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Explore the unique and bizarre Turkmen capital of Ashgabat on a guided tour of the city

Included in Kitty

See a myriad of incredible and impressive hand-woven carpets in the Ashgabat Carpet Museum (if open)

USD 10

Visit the huge Turkmenbashi Ruhy mosque on the outskirts of Ashgabat, built in 2004 as the mausoleum of Saparmurat Niyazov, the first president of Turkmenistan after the fall of the Soviet Union

Free

## Day 72: Turkmenbashi ( Tue 22 Sep )

This morning we have a full days drive to Turkmenbashi, on the shore of the Caspian Sea. If time permits we will stop at the spectacular Kow Ata Underground Lake on the way.

Estimated Drive Time - 10 - 11 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

Our itinerary in Turkmenbashi and over the Caspian Sea must remain very flexible and is very much determined by sailing times of the local ferries. Please note that there is no regular schedule for the ferries, they are notoriously unpredictable, and information from the ferry operators regarding the sailing times constantly changes (or is non-existent) up until the point of departure. Maximum flexibility, open-mindedness and co-operation with your tour leaders are absolutely essential here! When applying for your Azerbaijan E Visa please ensure when submitting your application that you state your entry date as arriving a few days prior to the actual date on your trip notes incase your ferry departs earlier than expected.

In Turkmenbashi we will stay in a local hotel for as many nights as is needed until we finally depart on the ferry over the Caspian Sea. Most trips tend to be able to set off on the ferry 1 or 2 days after arriving in Turkmenbashi.

## Day 73: Caspian Sea ( Wed 23 Sep )

From Turkmenbashi, we will take the ferry across the Caspian Sea to Baku in Azerbaijan.

The ferry is a fantastic local experience, but please do not expect any luxury whatsoever! These ferries are budget vessels for the locals and cargo hauliers, and are not designed with tourists in mind. We must be prepared for very basic conditions and limited provisions on board.

Please also note that the time that the ferry takes to cross is also highly unpredictable, as it is often forced to wait outside of the port in Baku while they arrange the unloading of the cargo on the boat..

There will generally only be seats on the ferry overnight

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Cross the Caspian Sea on a local transporter ferry between Baku and Turkmenbashi

USD 100

## Day 74 to 75: Baku ( Thu 24 Sep to Fri 25 Sep )

**Border information:** Exit Turkmenistan at Turkmenbashi, enter Azerbaijan at Baku.

Today we plan to disembark the Caspian ferry and enter Azerbaijan.

We will have free time on these days to explore all the sights of Baku and the surroundings.

In Baku we will stay in a local hotel.

*Please note that we have built in significant time in the above itinerary to allow for delays with the Caspian ferry. If the ferry comes in earlier than this, we may choose to move on from Baku earlier than listed to allow more time exploring the rest of Azerbaijan and Georgia.*

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Audio Guided trip around old town Baku including the Maiden Tower & Shirvan Shakh Palace

AZN 10

Explore the mysterious and iconic Maiden's Tower in Baku's Old Town

AZN 2.50

Learn all about the Shirvan Muslim history of Baku at the Palace of the Shirvanshahs

Included in Kitty

### About Baku:

Azerbaijan's capital of Baku is a bustling city on the coast of the Caspian Sea, an area that has been inhabited for centuries by many different civilisations, from the Romans to the Shirvanshahs to the Russians. Undergoing huge growth in the 20th Century due to the

discovery of oil, Baku today is a large metropolis which has a wide variety of architecture ranging from the ancient to the very modern.

## Day 76: Baku ( Sat 26 Sep )

**Border Information:** If joining in Baku, you will most likely enter Azerbaijan at Baku Heydar Aliyev International Airport (IATA code: GYD).

There will be an important group meeting at 6.00pm - please look out for a welcome note from your tour leader when you arrive at the joining hotel in Baku.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Baku before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales Team or your Sales Agent if you would like to book pre - tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Baku.

In Baku we will stay in a comfortable hotel with good facilities.

*\* Important note - please do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details. \**

Activity	Approximate Cost
Audio Guided trip around old town Baku including the Maiden Tower & Shirvan Shakh Palace	Included in Kitty
Explore the mysterious and iconic Maiden's Tower in Baku's Old Town	Included in Kitty
Learn all about the Shirvan Muslim history of Baku at the Palace of the Shirvanshahs	Included in Kitty

## Day 77: Baku ( Sun 27 Sep )

Today we will have free time to explore all the sites of Baku and the surroundings.

In Baku we will stay in a local hotel.

## Day 78: Lahij Village, Gobustan ( Mon 28 Sep )

This morning we will make our way to Lahic Village. An old coppersmiths village, nestled in the mountains. On the way we will stop in Gobustan, near the coast of the Caspian Sea where we will have a visit to the ancient petroglyphs and the mud volcanoes that this area is



famous for.

Tonight we will camp with facilities.

Estimated Drive Time 3 - 4 hours

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Day trip to Gobustan to see the mud volcanoes and the petroglyphs

Included in Kitty

### About Gobustan:

Gobustan is a small area on the Azeri coast of the Caspian Sea, which is famous for its petroglyphs and mud volcanoes. The region's ancient petroglyphs date back to the 12th-Century BCE and depict people, animals and constellations. There are over 300 volcanic mud pools in the area, nearly half the total number in the world!

## Day 79: Sheki ( Tue 29 Sep )

Leaving the village behind we make our way to the old town of Sheki this morning. Here we can visit the exquisite Khan's Palace.

In Sheki we will stay in a comfortable hotel built inside an old caravanserai.

Estimated Drive Time 3 -4 hours

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Overnight in an atmospheric converted Caravanserai at Sheki

Included in Kitty

Explore the exquisite Palace of the Sheki Khans, built in 1797

Included in Kitty

### About Sheki:

Sheki is a beautiful old town in northern Azerbaijan that has been settled since around 700 BCE. Having been occupied by many different civilisations throughout its history, it has a fascinating array of architecture and culture, and contains one of the best preserved caravanserais on the Silk Road.

## Day 80: Lagodekhi ( Wed 30 Sep )

Border Information: Exit Azerbaijan at Balakan, enter Georgia at Lagodekhi.

Today we will continue our journey west and cross the border into Georgia.

We will wild camp tonight, most likely in the Lagodekhi National Park shortly after crossing the border.

Estimated Drive Time 3 - 4 hours

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Discover the ancient capital of the 16th-century Kingdom of Kakheti at the Gremi Architectural Complex

GEL 10

Take some short exploratory walks around our wild camp in the beautiful forested Lagodekhi National Park

GEL 5

## Day 81: Telavi ( Thu 01 Oct )

Today we will drive to the Alazani valley and on to Telavi, where we will base ourselves for 2 days to explore this fascinating region. We will visit the Gremi citadel en route, and have a free afternoon on arrival in Telavi to explore the area.

In Telavi we will stay in a local family-run guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time 2 - 3 hours

### About Telavi:

Telavi is the capital of the wine-growing region of Kakheti and is situated in the valley of Alazani, near the Gombori Mountains. Telavi is a charming place and has fine views of the Caucasus Mountains. Nearby we visit the 6th Century Shaumta Monastery, which is beautifully located on an isolated forested hilltop.

There are hundreds of different grapes grown here, and every village has its own particular variety - we will hopefully see some of the local traditions, including grape harvesting, wine making, the keipi (banquet), and also visit some of the local vineyards.

## Day 82: Telavi ( Fri 02 Oct )

The area of Telavi is well known for its vineyards and wineries - there are hundreds of different grapes grown here, and every village has its own particular variety. We will visit some of the local vineyards today, where we can hopefully see some of the local traditions including grape harvesting and wine making, and enjoy some famous Georgian hospitality.

We will spend a 2nd night in a family-run guesthouse

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Head out on Telavi's 'Big Day Out' - a tour of the town's monasteries, bee-keepers and textile-weavers, followed by lunch and wine tasting at a local family-run winery

Included in Kitty

## Day 83: Stepantsminda ( Sat 03 Oct )

Today our journey begins with a beautiful drive to the spectacularly located town of Stepantsminda (formerly known as Kazbegi).

Either this afternoon or tomorrow morning, we will take a trek up to the Tsminda Sameba Church (the Church of the Holy Trinity), a beautiful small church nestled in the mountains.

In Stepantsminda we will stay in a family-run guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time 4 - 5 hours

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Hike to beautiful 14th-century Gergeti Trinity Church, set in the stunning mountains above Stepantsminda

Included in Kitty

### About Stepantsminda:

Stepantsminda, formerly known as Kazbegi, is a small town in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region of north-eastern Georgia, an area famed for its natural beauty. Looming over the town is the 14th-Century Georgian Orthodox church of Tsminda Sameba, which can be trekked to from the town - it's one of the most stunningly-located churches in the world, with the spectacular towering Caucasus Mountains in the background.

## Day 84: Mtskheta ( Sun 04 Oct )

We spend the morning in and around Stepantsminda, where we can trek to the Tsminda Sameba Church if we haven't done so already.

This afternoon we have a beautiful drive to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia. Whilst here we will explore the 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral.

In Mskheta we will stay overnight in a local guesthouse.

Estimated Drive Time 3 -5 hours

## Day 85: Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, Vardzia ( Mon 05 Oct )

After breakfast we will make our way to Borjome National Park where we will have time to do a small hike through the ancient forest and an optional cable ride up the mountain.

In the afternoon we will continue on to Vardzia where we will find a place to wild camp for the night in the stunning valley. If time permits we will have an included visit to the Vardzia Caves this afternoon if not we will have the chance to explore them tomorrow morning also.

Tonight we will wild camp

Estimated Drive Time 4 - 5 hours

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the impressive Vardzia Cave Monastery

Included in Kitty

Cable Car ride to the pine woods of Borjomi Plateau

GEL 3

### About Vardzia:

Vardzia is a cave monastery site in southern Georgia. Carved into the side of the Erusheti mountain in Georgia it is definitely an impressive site to see. The area is surrounded by cliffs, canyons and gorges as well as many small picturesque villages dotted around in the stunning valley.

## Day 86: Armenian Highlands ( Tue 06 Oct )

We continue south towards the Armenian border this morning. Once we have crossed we will drive through the beautiful Armenian Highlands before finding a place to bush camp for the night.

Tonight we will wild camp

Estimated Drive Time 5- 6 hours

## Day 87 to 88: Yerevan ( Wed 07 Oct to Thu 08 Oct )

Today we will make our way to the city of Yerevan. On the way we will have an included visit to Khor Virap Monastery.

We will have 2 nights in Yerevan on the 2nd day we will have free time for optional activities or simply relaxing and soaking up the city atmosphere.

Estimated Drive Time 4 - 5 hours

For the next 2 nights we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

### Activity

### Approximate Cost

Visit the Garni Temple and learn about its fascinating pre-Christian history

Included in Kitty

Visit the Medieval Geghard Monastery

Included in Kitty

Explore the beautiful Khor Virap Monastery near the Turkish border. On a clear day you will have stunning views of Mt Ararat in the background.

Included in Kitty

Take a tour of the Ararat Brandy Museum and discover the history of Armenian Brandy USD 25

**About Yerevan:**

Known as the 'Pink City' because of the colour of the stones used to build much of the city centre, Yerevan is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

From old fashioned tea houses to chic Wine bars, Yerevan is a melting pot of old and new. During the summer time you will find locals spilling out on to the streets enjoying the long and warm drawn out evenings. You can spend your time in this vibrant city either wandering the soviet style streets, visiting the many museums and immersing yourself into the local way of life.

**Day 89: Lake Sevan ( Fri 09 Oct )**

We will leave the city of Yerevan behind this morning and make our way to the World Heritage - listed Geghard Monastery which has been carved out of the rock face of the Azat River Gorge. We will also spend some time exploring the Garni Temple before we continue onto the beautiful Lake Sevan.

Tonight we will camp by the sparkling waters of Lake Sevan

Estimated Drive Time 4 -5 hours

**Activity**

**Approximate Cost**

Camp on the shores of Lake Sevan

Included in Kitty

**About Lake Sevan:**

Lake Sevan is the largest lake in the Caucasus region and is also one of the largest freshwater altitude lakes in the world. The coastline is surrounded by pebble beaches, thick wooded forests and high mountain peaks. A popular tourist destination for locals in the summer being so accessible for Yerevan for hiking or swimming in the cool blue sparkling waters which change in colours and shades with the change of weather.

**Day 90: Tbilisi ( Sat 10 Oct )**

Today we will be driving through the beautiful Dilijan National Park before arriving at the Georgian Border. Once the formalities are over we will continue onto the ancient city of Tbilisi.

Tonight we will stay in a good quality hotel in the city.

Estimated Drive Time

**About Tbilisi:**

The Georgian capital of Tbilisi is very historic - it was founded in the

5th-Century CE, and by the 12th-Century it had become a very important cultural and economic centre. Its geographical position gave it a lot of control over the Silk Road, and hence it became a regional superpower. The Old City is full of churches and ancient wooden houses, and it's easy to spend a day wandering around this charming city. It is also worth visiting the oriental markets and making a visit to the Narikala Fortress, which dominates the city's skyline.

## Day 91: Tbilisi ( Sun 11 Oct )

**Border Information:** If you are leaving in Tbilisi, you will most likely exit Georgia at Tbilisi International Airport (IATA code: TBS).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Tbilisi. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact the Sales Team if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities listed below.

Activity	Approximate Cost
Enjoy an evening of local dancing and music at a Georgian restaurant in Tbilisi	GEL 35
Learn all about the history of Georgia during Soviet times, and the struggle for independence, at the Museum of Soviet Occupation	GEL 3
Explore the ancient Narikala Fortress and take in the fantastic views of Tbilisi below	Free
Relax with a dip or a massage at a traditional Georgian sulphur bath house	GEL 2
Visit the beautiful Orthodox Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi's Old Town	Free
Discover the folk architecture, craftwork and culture of the various regions of Georgia at the Giorgi Chitaia Open Air Museum of Ethnography	GEL 1.5
See the incredible collection of historical artefacts at the Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia	GEL 3
See the grandiose modern Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi, the seat of the Georgian Orthodox Church	Free

## IMPORTANT NOTES

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

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

We update these notes regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our 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, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards.

## ALTITUDE WARNING

### **Warning - this trip goes above 2800m.**

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

For further information please [click here to download our AMS information sheet](#) or refer to the following website: [www.high-altitude-medicine.com](http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com)

Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival.

**Some Travel Insurance companies will stipulate a maximum altitude limit. Please ensure that you are covered and if necessary pay the additional premium of extended cover.**

## VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MEDICATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Please note that as of 2014 all medications containing **tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine, opiates or any containing similar constituent components** have been made illegal in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This includes many over-the-counter medicines that are commonly available elsewhere, such as Nurofen! Please see here for more information - <http://sambuh.com/procedure-psychotropic-substances.html>

It is very important that you do not bring any medications such as this - they will treat this as though you were bringing illegal narcotics into the country. They are very strict about this, and it does not matter if you are only transiting through, and it makes no difference if you have a prescription or a doctor's note - please do not bring these medications to Central Asia under any circumstance, as the customs agents know exactly what they are looking for and the consequences could be huge, not only for yourself but for the tour leaders, for Dragoman's future operation in the region and especially for our local agents and guides.

Please note that we cannot take anyone on these trips who refuses to dispose of such medicines or refuses to co-operate with the tour leaders if they need to inspect any personal medicines - thank you for your understanding in this matter.

If you have any prescription medications that do not come under the above list, please bring the

prescription along and declare the medicines on any customs declaration forms throughout your trip.

## 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. There are some high altitudes in places and many places where walking around for several hours is the only way to explore (e.g. The Great Wall of China, walking tours in Uzbekistan, exploring the historical sites of India, etc.).

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.

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available. If you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

## VISA INFORMATION

### CHINA

**VERY IMPORTANT - Dragoman will require a clear colour scan of your passport as soon as possible after booking for all trips in China, please send this to us as soon as you can. Please note it must be clear, with no shadows and show the entire passport page as well as the adjacent page. This must be an actual scan of your passport and photos will not be accepted. We will also require an ID photo and a scanned copy of your China Visa at least 8 weeks prior to your arrival at the Chinese border.**

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will** need a visa to enter China as a tourist for up to 90 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Chinese agent in order to make the visa application, and you must obtain the visa **in advance**. You cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you requesting further information in order for us to make this application on your behalf, a service that is included in the trip price. These can take several weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready.

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at a Chinese Embassy in your home country. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas). Dragoman will also provide a letter confirming your participation in the trip and a list of our hotels, which you may need for the application - in some cases the Chinese Embassy may ask for a day-by-day itinerary with the hotels listed, which we can provide when needed.

You will need to apply at the Chinese Embassy in your home country, as your application is far more likely to be approved. Although there is no official reason why you should not be issued a visa at any Chinese embassy, their consular officials are notorious for constantly changing their minds about whether they will approve a visa for 'non-resident' applicants, and it depends heavily on the political climate of the time.



Please note if you are applying for a China Visa in the UK you will also now need to attend an appointment in London to have your fingerprints taken.

**IMPORTANT NOTE - Please NEVER mention Kashgar, Urumqi, Turpan, Lhasa, Xinjiang or Tibet anywhere on your Chinese visa application form - this will almost certainly result in your application being rejected. When filling out your Chinese visa form, please only declare the places that are listed on your Chinese Letter of Invitation once it is issued.**

If you are asked to provide a host in China on your visa form, please use the details of the Chinese agent that issued your Letter of Invitation (this will be printed on the letter).

You **will not** need a China visa if you are entering Tibet from Nepal (Northbound Tibet trip), but you **will** need a China visa if you are going to Tibet from Xi'an (Southbound Tibet trip). Please see the Tibet note for details on the visa requirements for travelling through Tibet.

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#) (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Many countries that we visit on our travels will require visas to enter. 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 read the information very carefully to make sure everything is clear and you aware of what you need to do. Please also be aware that rules surrounding visas do change, often suddenly, and without prior warning. This is why it is important that you also double-check the information we provide for yourself.

For visas that are needed in advance, you may wish to submit the applications directly to the relevant embassy or consulate. If you require any supporting documentation for your visa applications, Dragoman will obtain this on your behalf as part of your trip price - we will contact you to request additional information in order to make this application for you.

However, for trips that involve multiple visas, you may find it beneficial to use a specialist visa agency to assist you with your applications. While this does sometimes increase the cost, it usually makes the process much easier for you.

As you will often 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.

Most countries require that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your entry into the country.

For trips that are not yet guaranteed, you may find yourself in the position whereby you will need to start the visa application process prior to your trip being guaranteed - in this situation we still advise you **not** to purchase flights until your trip is guaranteed. However, you **can** start your visa application process, ensuring that when applying for your visas or letters of invitation that you allow several days before and after your entry into the country to allow for delays, availability of flights, etc.

## TURKMENISTAN

Citizens of all countries **will** need a visa to enter Turkmenistan for up to 10 days. You will need a Letter of Invitation from a Turkmen agent in order to make the visa application.

Firstly you will need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you to request additional information in order for us to make this application on your behalf. These support documents can take 4 - 5 weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready. Please note that there is a risk of your Letter of Invitation being rejected by the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs which we have noticed has increased since last season. Unfortunately the decision that the ministry makes is completely out of our control and often they will not provide a reason as to why they have rejected the

application, which we understand can be frustrating. If your Letter of Application is rejected and you are part of a longer trip, we will do our best to help with making alternative travel arrangements until you can rejoin the group, however this will be at your own cost. We would also strongly recommend if flying into or out of Turkmenistan that you purchase flexible flight tickets in the event that your application is rejected.

*Turkmenistan Letters of Invitation are typically issued once a day to the complete group of people that happen to have applied on the same day through the same agent; as such your name, nationality and passport number will appear on a list on the Letter of Invitation alongside other tourists who may be on your Dragoman trip or travelling with other companies, and this list will be shared with everyone on it. As this is a standard practice of the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we do not have any control over this and cannot get around it; if you view this as an unacceptable breach of privacy, then you will be unable to apply for the Letter of Invitation and will not be able to travel to Turkmenistan.*

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa **in advance** at any Turkmen Embassy. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas).

If you are joining the trip in Ashgabat, it is possible to obtain the visa **on arrival at Ashgabat International Airport**. It is also possible to obtain the visa **on arrival at the land border with Uzbekistan at Dashoguz** if you are on a Westbound trip. Both of these options can be very time-consuming on arrival, so it is recommended that you obtain the visas **in advance if possible** – you will need the Letter of Invitation in all cases. You must get your visa **in advance** if you will arrive into Turkmenistan at the **port of Turkmenbashi** after the Caspian Sea ferry on an Eastbound trip, as there are no visas available at the port – you will be denied entry onto the ferry in Baku if you do not have your visa in place. If obtaining your visa on arrival at one of the above locations please note all visa related fees are generally only to be paid in USD cash. Costs will vary for different nationalities as well as entry ports. Besides the visa fee, you will also be charged an immigration fee between 14 USD and 18 USD regardless if you already hold your visa or obtain it on arrival.

If you are asked to provide an address in Turkmenistan on your visa form, please use the address below:

*Ak Altyn Hotel,  
141/1 Magtymguly Avenue,  
744000,  
Ashgabat,  
Turkmenistan  
Tel: +99 312 363 700*

If you are asked to provide a host in Turkmenistan on your visa form, please use the details of the Turkmen agent that issued your Letter of Invitation (this will be printed on the letter).

We will need to register your visa within 3 days of entering the country. Your Dragoman leader can do this on your behalf, but please bring 2 passport photos for the registration process.

## **UZBEKISTAN**

Citizens of the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and most EU countries do not require a visa to travel to Uzbekistan for up to 30 days as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2019.

Citizens of the USA will be required to obtain an E visa to enter Uzbekistan as a tourist for up to 30 days.

E Visa's must be applied for **online** and in **advance** – please go to <https://e-visa.gov.uz/main> to apply; it should take 1 – 2 weeks to be approved, then they will send a visa approval confirmation to your email address which you must print out to present at the border – the costs may vary depending on your nationality. Please note the visa's are only valid for 3 months from the date of issue.

If you are asked to provide an address in Uzbekistan on your visa form, please use the address below:

## Uzbekistan Hotel

45 Mirzamakhmud Musakhaov Street

Tashkent

Uzbekistan

Tel - +998711131111

For citizens of countries that are not eligible for an E Visa, you will need to apply for a tourist visa at your closest embassy. You will also need a Letter of Invitation from an Uzbek agent in order to make the visa application, and you must obtain the visa in advance. You cannot obtain the visa at the border in any circumstance.

Firstly you may need to apply for the Letter of Invitation through Dragoman - we will contact you to request additional information in order to make this application on your behalf. This service is included. These support documents can take several weeks to issue, and will be emailed to you once they are ready. You will need to specify at which Uzbek embassy you intend to make your visa application at.

*Please note that Uzbekistan Letters of Invitation are typically issued once a day to the complete group of people that happen to have applied on the same day through the same agent addressed to the same consulate; as such your name, nationality and passport number will appear on a list on the Letter of Invitation alongside other tourists who may be on your Dragoman trip or travelling with other companies, and this list will be shared with everyone on it. As this is a standard practice of the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we do not have any control over this and cannot get around it; if you view this as an unacceptable breach of privacy, then you will be unable to apply for the Letter of Invitation and will not be able to travel to Uzbekistan.*

After your Letter of Invitation has been issued, you can use this to apply for the visa in advance at the Uzbek Embassy specified on your Letter of Invitation. You can either apply yourself directly to the embassy, or hire a specialist visa agency to make the application on your behalf (which is recommended, especially if you are applying for several visas). Please note that you will only be able to apply at the embassy that you have previously specified, and your Letter of Invitation will not be valid for any other Uzbek Embassy.

If you are joining the trip in Tashkent or are on an Eastbound trip, you will need to obtain your visa in advance of travel. If you are travelling on a Westbound trip, many travellers choose to obtain their visa in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Please ensure if you choose to obtain your Uzbekistan visa in Bishkek that you have your application form printed and ready to go along with any supporting documents required before you start your trip. Please note that the visa is only valid for a period of 3 months from the date of issue.

## KYRGYZSTAN

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most EU countries **will not** need a visa to enter Kyrgyzstan as a tourist for up to 60 days. Please note that citizens of Bulgaria, Romania and South Africa **will** need a visa.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will be able to obtain it **on arrival** at the border - the cost will depend on nationality.

A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from [areas with risk of yellow fever transmission](#).

## GEORGIA

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries **will not** need a visa to enter Georgia as a tourist for up to 90 days.

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a

visa is required, you will need to obtain it **in advance**.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and most EU countries **will** need a visa to enter Azerbaijan as a tourist for up to 30 days.

If you require an e-visa, they must be applied for **online** and in **advance** - please go to <https://evisa.gov.az/en/> to apply; it should take 1-3 days to be approved, then they will send a visa approval confirmation to your email address which you must print out to present at the border - the costs vary depending on nationality. It is not possible to get a visa on arrival.

If asked to provide an address in Azerbaijan on your visa form, please use the address below: -

Hotel Boyuk Gala  
Icherischer  
Mirza Mansur 68  
Baku  
1095  
Azerbaijan  
Tel +994 ( 12 ) 4372582

Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether an e-visa is required.

## **ARMENIA**

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, USA and most EU countries will not need a visa to enter Armenia as a tourist for up to 180 days.

Citizens of most other countries should be able to obtain an E-Visa in advance through the Armenian Foreign Affairs website <https://evisa.mfa.am/>. If you do not qualify for an E-Visa you will need to check with the relevant consulates for any visa requirements and how to obtain them.

## **PERSONAL SPENDING**

### **PERSONAL SPENDING - ASIA**

Based on the range that previous travellers have spent on this trip, we recommend you allow between USD15-30 per day for Central Asia, China and Burma and between USD10-USD20 per day 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.

For trips in Southern India that occur over Christmas and New Year please allow approximately **USD160** extra on the kitty for seasonal increases in accommodation costs.

## **ASIA CURRENCIES AND 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!

Bringing a sensible mix of cash and ATM cards is the best way to bring money out, but it's always a good idea to bring plenty of cash that you can change (USD and EUR are commonly changed throughout Asia) rather than relying on cards. 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. ATMs are available in most areas but are not always reliable. You may also find your card doesn't work in all ATM's. Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are accepted in some major cities, but be prepared for very high commission charges.

Banks and moneychangers in most countries in Asia will now only accept bills with a metallic strip running top to bottom of the bill and which are **no more than 8 years old**. You should not take worn or damaged notes, or any that have been written on. Please also bring a mixture of small and large denominations - you may get a better rate for changing larger denomination bills, but in more remote areas it can be difficult to change amounts over USD50.

Please note that due to restrictions on currency conversion for foreigners in many Asian countries, it may not be possible to change leftover local currency back into USD after your trip, so please plan your budget well by withdrawing/exchanging what you need as you go.

## WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Overland Lifestyle and Trip Suitability

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off the beaten track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity. On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc.

Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out!

We are looking forward to welcoming you on one of our overland journeys, but before we do there are a few things we would like to draw to your attention.

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### Who Travels with Dragoman?

Our groups are made up of people from around the world, and are always an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split between 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 (or 7 on our Family Trips), as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you, whatever your age is. One of the wonderful aspects of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and the variety of people that you will meet.

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### 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 Cuzco and during the Inca Treks. This means a group starting a trip in Cuzco will embark on the Inca Trail at the same time as a group finishing in or travelling through Cuzco. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Cuzco and on the Inca Trail at the same time.

Please note that there is also 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 a group starting their trip there. In practical terms this means there could be more than 22 group members in Zanzibar at the same time.

Please also note that on some departures there may be more than one truck doing the same route. This means that you will be in the same hotel or campsite as another Dragoman group on some days. To ensure that you are not always at the same place at the same time as another group, your itinerary will most likely be slightly altered from the itinerary advertised in these trip notes.

## **Our Crew and Guides**

Our crew are passionate about travel and are always up for adventure. It takes someone special to become a Dragoman leader. Our crew undergo the most intensive training program of all the overland companies, spending 8 weeks learning the ropes at our base in Suffolk, UK, and then up to 6 months on the road as a trainee. Our crew are trained to manage and operate the trip safely and efficiently and their duties include: planning the trip according to the itinerary, driving and maintaining the truck, securing services of local guides, general logistics, health and safety, liaising with bureaucracy, dealing with issues where needed and offering advice and support to our customers. In addition they have a basic knowledge of the places visited and will be able to offer suggestions of things to do and see. Dragoman endeavours to provide the services of experienced crew, however, due to the seasonality of travel, situations may arise where your tour leader is new to a particular region or training other crew, new to the area.

On all Dragoman overlanding trips, we usually have 2 western crew but please be aware that there may be times when one crew member has to leave the trip due to unforeseen circumstances such as visa issues, illness of a group member, etc. On some of our trips we have 1 western crew and 1 local driver instead of 2 western crew. On trips south of Nairobi 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.

On the majority of our trips in Ethiopia, Sudan, Central Asia, China and South East Asia, in addition to our crew we will have a local guide on board who will travel with us for the entire duration of our time within one country. In these cases, the local guide becomes a third crew member and is able to offer their local knowledge as well as an insight into their country and the lives of the local people.

In most other areas of Africa, the Americas, India and Turkey, in addition to our crew we will employ local guides in specific locations of interest (for just a few hours up to a few days).

Your crew have a duty of care to all members of the group and therefore they have the authority to ask you to leave the trip if you require serious medical assistance, you 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.

## **Accommodation on Tour**

Dragoman's overland trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether camping or staying in hotels or hostels, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Whilst our crew will do their best to accommodate couples travelling together in twin rooms, all our travellers should expect to stay in multi-share accommodation when staying in hostels, gers or yurts.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available at the time; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be single sex, twin-share, but in South America many rooms are triple/quad-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share and may be mixed sex.

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 camp away from the tourist crowds. Occasionally on some of our trips we are able to stay in villages or local homestays allowing us to get close to the indigenous population and ensuring that our money stays within the local community.

## The Kitty

In addition to the trip price on our overlanding trips, you will also be required to pay a kitty specified for your trip (please note that there is no kitty on our Family Trips). The kitty is payable in installments at the start of each section of the trip for combination trips, and in full at the start of the trip for individual trips. Each customer joining a trip pays their kitty into a central fund. The fund is managed by the Dragoman crew and the kitty accounts can be viewed by all throughout the trip.

The kitty covers all things that the whole group does, such as:

- Hotel accommodation and campsite fees
- Meals whilst camping (not whilst staying in hotels)
- Activities listed as included (e.g. National Park or historical site entrances, excursions, etc.)

The kitty system is unique to overlanding and allows us to have flexibility and transparency on our trips. You can see exactly how your money is being spent and ensure that you are getting the best value by buying locally. It also helps to keep the costs competitive and save on administration costs so that we can pass the saving on to you. Dragoman makes NO PROFIT on kitties, as they are the group's fund. If there is money left in the kitty at the end of your trip, then this is divided between the group and you receive a refund.

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. We constantly update the kitty prices on our website and the kitty advertised in the brochure is an estimate at the time of printing. Prices can go up or down with no notice, and exchange rate fluctuations will affect costs.

The kitty is payable in full at the start of your trip (in instalments at the start of each individual trip on combination trips). Alternatively you can pay in advance via a bank transfer 3-4 weeks before the start of your trip - please see [http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty\\_doc\\_v10.pdf](http://www.dragoman.com/files/Kitty_doc_v10.pdf) for more details - this information sheet will also be sent in your booking confirmation upon booking a trip and can be found on [www.dragoman.com/overlanding/planning-your-trip/money](http://www.dragoman.com/overlanding/planning-your-trip/money). Please also note that prepayment is not available for our trips to West Africa, Iran, Tajikistan and any trip in Africa north of Nairobi.

If you are bringing the kitty out in cash, please ensure your USD notes (EUR notes if your trip goes through West Africa) are clean and undamaged and **no more than 8 years old**. If needed, your tour leader will be able to accept some of the kitty in local currency, and they will let you know the exchange rate locally. In most destinations you can withdraw local currencies from ATM machines, using either a cash passport or a credit/debit card. However, please bear in mind that most cards have a maximum withdrawal amount per day, local ATMs may run out of cash, and your bank could block the card despite you warning them of your travel plans, so it could be impractical to try to get the entire kitty out from an ATM.

We cannot accept traveller's cheques on our trips.

## Meals and Group Participation

On an overland journey you are more than just an individual passenger - you're part of the team. You are expected to pitch in to set up camp, shop for food, cook and generally help out. As part of your trip you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting water and firewood, sweeping out the truck, loading the back locker, etc. While camping on overland journeys, the meals are included in the kitty. This means that you will have to work together to cook for everyone in your group. You will be divided into smaller units of 3-4 people and take it in turns to cook for the whole group according to a rota system. When it is your group's turn to cook you will have to plan the meal, shop for the ingredients in local markets or supermarkets and then prepare the meal for the whole group. The secret to cooking for 20+ people using a basic camping kitchen is to keep it simple! (On trips south of Nairobi we have a cook on board the truck; however you will still be required to help them to prepare meals).

An example of a typical camp breakfast might be toast with spreads, fruit and cereal as well as tea and

coffee. When time allows it will also be possible to serve something hot such as eggs or pancakes. Lunch is almost always a sandwich heaped high with healthy salad and assorted fillings, with fruit to follow. Dinner might be a BBQ, risotto or 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.

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## Dietary Requirements

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and tell your crew at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible. However, it must be remembered that it may not always be possible and the variety of dishes may be severely limited in comparison to those available to others. If there is anything in particular you require in your diet, that you would miss from home, or because of an allergy would miss out on, it would be best to bring this with you. Depending on your particular requirements, you may need to allow yourself some extra spending money to allow you to purchase extra food items.

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## Itineraries

Our itineraries are developed and published with the best of intentions, however travel in more remote areas of the world is unpredictable – borders can close, there can be extreme adverse weather, strikes or maybe mechanical issues that affect the running of your trip, but equally due to the nature of our trips we can often spontaneously include a local festival or event into the itinerary. This being said, the safety of our passengers, leaders and operators is a priority for us. 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. We make operational decisions based on informed advice from a number of sources, including the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice, reports from other travel companies and local suppliers, leaders' reports from off the road and local contacts we have built up over many years of experience.

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## British Foreign Office Travel Advice and Warnings

Dragoman follows the British Foreign Office Travel advice when deciding where and where we are unable to travel. We will base our decisions on itineraries and alterations to published routes based on their advice rather than the advice of other governments. We will advise you of any significant changes in advice before travel or whilst you are overseas.

However, we recommend you check the latest travel advisories from your own government for the country you are travelling to before you book and prior to departure. If there are any travel warnings present for the region you will travel to, as well as considering whether you are happy to travel despite the warning you must also check to ensure that it is not invalidating your travel insurance. Here are a few useful addresses:

UK - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

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

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

United States - <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>

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

We also recommend that you check out the UK Travel Aware website before you travel at <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/>. This website offers straightforward travel advice, top tips, and up-to-date country information to help you plan a safe trip.

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## Health



You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with our style of travel. To help you assess if this trip is suitable, please refer to the physical rating. The ratings for each trip are a good indication of how challenging they are and in some cases you should be prepared for some long driving days and possibly limited facilities. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Dragoman reserves the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip without a refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. You must also declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase and provide evidence to us prior to departure that your pre-existing medical condition has been declared to your insurers. Failure to do so will mean that you are unable to join the trip.

## **Extreme Environments**

There may be periods of time within your trip when you meet extreme conditions, such as extreme heat, extreme wind, extreme cold, extreme humidity, extreme altitude, extreme crowds etc. Whilst our crew will let you know at the time when you are likely to meet these conditions, please ensure that you have read through the trip notes carefully and researched the local weather conditions at the time and that you feel that you are fit enough to cope with these conditions. If you have any doubts at all, please contact us to discuss your concerns prior to booking, and when on trip, if you find that the local conditions are causing you concern at any time, please be sure to let your trip leader know so that appropriate precautions can be discussed.

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## **Altitude**

Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor. For trips that travel to areas of high altitude, the tour leader will issue you with a self-assessment altitude questionnaire which allows you to monitor how you are coping with the altitude and informs you of danger signals so that you can report these as soon as possible, either to the tour leader or a medical professional.

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## **Yellow Fever**

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

## **Malaria & other mosquito-borne diseases**

There is a risk of contracting malaria in some areas which we travel through. If your trip goes to a areas with malaria it is always best to get expert advice before travelling about the types of malaria pills available, whether they are recommended, and take any that are prescribed as instructed. Consult your GP or travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and are becoming a bigger problem around the world. Mosquito bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases, as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus. For more information about Zika please visit:

- WHO: [www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zika-virus)

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika)

The Anopheles mosquitoes that transmit malaria usually bite between the hours of dusk and dawn, whereas the Aedes mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever, dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika bite both during the day and the night. To prevent being bitten, it is recommended to cover up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light-coloured and buttoned at the wrists. Do not sleep without closing your windows, tent door, etc. and use a mosquito net in hotels or if sleeping outside where there are mosquitoes present. Use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing. Treating clothes and mosquito nets with a Permethrin solution also provides significant protection. It should be available at most travel stores. Mosquito coils are useful on still nights and in hotel rooms, but cannot be used inside the tents. For more advice on how to avoid bites please see: [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance)

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## Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protections vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest specific health advice on the regions and countries you are planning to travel in, so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel. The following websites are also a helpful resource:

[www.nathnac.net](http://www.nathnac.net) and [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

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. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

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## Safety & Security

At Dragoman your safety is of paramount importance and we will do our best to ensure that your travel with us is safe and trouble-free, but we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst you are away and to understand about the nature of this style of travel.

Of course we want you to have an enjoyable time, but you must also remember that part of the enjoyment of travel is experiencing a different way of life and cultures. This may also mean experiencing different safety and hygiene standards than those you are normally used to.

Therefore, please take note of the following safety tips and follow any local safety advice or briefings delivered by our crew or any third-party suppliers we use during your trip.

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## Transport Safety

- Our own vehicles have fully-fitted seat belts; make sure you always belt up.
- If you find a safety belt inoperable or missing on one of our vehicles, please inform the crew immediately.
- Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that other vehicles we may use or recommend in some countries will be fitted with seat belts on every seat as it is not a legal requirement in much of the world.
- Please remain seated on board vehicles at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
- Never place luggage in the aisles or foot wells.
- Ensure you know where your nearest Emergency exit is; this may be a designated emergency exit, a window, a door, or a roof hatch.
- Check the location of the fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- Follow any safety instructions provided by the crew/driver.
- Our vehicles are fitted with roof seats which can be used in certain conditions, such as when driving at low speeds, off main tarmac roads, etc. The roof hatches can only be opened and the roof seats used with the express permission of the crew and you must never sit in the roof seats without seat belts.

## Road Safety

- Traffic in some countries travels on the opposite side of the road to what you may be used to, so ensure you look both ways before crossing the road.
- In many countries vehicles do not automatically stop at crossings and driving styles may be very unpredictable, so please remain very vigilant when near roads and vehicles.
- Crash helmets are often not provided with mopeds and motorbikes overseas – we do not recommend you hire these vehicles.

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## Fire & Other Safety - Hostels/Hotels/Homestays

- Ensure you know where your nearest fire exit is and check to ensure that it is operative.
- Check the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.
- Study the fire instructions in your room if available.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point well away from the building.
- Electrics in hotels in many of the places that we visit will not be up to the same standards as at home. Please ensure that you check rooms, especially bathrooms and are aware of any issues that look unsafe. If in doubt inform the crew who will endeavour to sort the situation out if possible.
- Staircases and stairwells are often built to a very different design than under western building standards. There may be no guard rails, be excessively steep, have dangerous gaps between the stairs and the wall, etc. At all times be aware and take appropriate and prudent care.
- We often stay in homestays and farmstays. These may range from a traditional yurt through to a tree house or a town house. As these are traditional homes, they may well not adhere to our western standards of safety and so it is important that you make yourself aware of potential risks.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with the hotels/hostels or homestays.

## Fire Safety - Campsites

- Ensure you know where the nearest source of water or fire extinguisher is.
- Know how to raise the alarm.
- Extinguish all camping fires fully before retiring to bed.
- Observe any regulations regarding fires and bushfires in dry conditions.
- Identify how to raise the alarm if a fire occurs.
- If a fire occurs, leave immediately; do not stop to collect your effects.
- Proceed to an assembly point away from the tented accommodation/affected campsite.

## Other Campsite Safety & Security

- Familiarise yourself with the campsite and any known hazards.
- Group the tents around our vehicle wherever possible.
- No open flames, smoking or flammable liquids in or near the tents.
- Ensure the cooking area is well away from the tents.
- Ensure all water for cooking and drinking is purified first.
- Ensure any soil toilets are a minimum of 50m away from the tents and the cooking area.
- All food waste should be burned or buried a minimum of 100m away from the site.
- Ensure local advice is followed concerning any wildlife in the area.
- Keep valuables locked in the vehicle.
- Be aware of any local security issues that might be important.
- Do not set out tents close to perimeter fences which may be a security risk.
- Be aware of the security arrangements and local guards for campsite and if in doubt ask them where and where not to pitch tents.
- If in doubt please inform the crew of any safety issues with campsite.
- When wild camping, ensure that you do not wander away from the camp alone. If you do leave camp, ensure that you have notified the leader or other members of the group.

## Food Safety

- Make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked.
- Hot food should be hot, cold food should be cold.
- Avoid any uncooked food, except fruit and vegetables (notably those you can peel or shell yourself).
- In many countries you should only drink bottled water or purified water and ensure any seal is intact when purchasing bottles.
- On the Dragoman vehicles we have a tank of drinking water that is kept purified by the crew.
- Avoid ice in drinks as this can cause upset stomachs in hot climates.
- Make sure you wash your hands in antibacterial product when preparing and/or eating food.
- Many of the restaurants that you will eat in, either as a group or as individuals, will NOT have the same standards of food hygiene as we have in the western world. Unfortunately this is a reality of life in these regions. Therefore please think carefully about where you eat, what food you order and be aware of the risks.

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## Personal Safety

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. 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. We have come up with a few pointers that we recommend you follow:

- Follow the crew's specific safety advice in each destination.
- Always remain aware and vigilant, and stay away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Avoid carrying too much money.
- Always avoid carrying your passport, driving licence, air tickets, and other valuable items around with you unless this is essential. Instead, keep valuables such as this locked away in the truck's safe, or the safety deposit box in the room or reception of the hotel/hostel.
- If you are carrying cash, cards or valuables, use a money belt or neck wallet which are more easily concealed and more difficult to pickpocket.
- Do not take any valuable jewellery, watches, etc. away with you in the first place.
- Avoid walking in poorly lit areas.
- If possible avoid walking around on your own; it is always safer to explore with others.
- Always try to walk with confidence and purpose, which will help you avoid looking like a lost tourist!
- Take special care when walking to avoid spraining or twisting your ankle on potholes, cobbles and uneven ground.

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## Activity Safety & Optional Activities

You will have the opportunity to take part in many exciting activities and excursions, some of which are included (e.g. hiking the Inca Trail, trekking to see Mountain Gorillas, visiting the Taj Mahal, etc.), whilst others are optional (e.g. white water rafting in Uganda, zip-lining in Costa Rica, etc.). Some of these activities require a certain level of fitness, so it's important that you read through the trip notes thoroughly and make your own conclusions as to whether you feel that you are fit and healthy enough to enjoy this trip and its activities to their fullest.

Some activities may have higher risks than you are used to and you must judge whether or not you wish, or have the physical ability, to take part.

Please note that riding helmets are mandatory for all optional and included horse riding activities. This is an insurance requirement.

Optional activities mentioned by Dragoman are not included in the trip price or kitty, and do not form part

of your contract with Dragoman. As such you accept that any assistance given by Dragoman crew members or local representatives in arranging optional activities does not render us liable for them in any way. The Dragoman crew are assisting you in arranging these activities for your added enjoyment whilst on your trip. The operators of these services and optional extras are local suppliers who contract directly with the client 'on the road', subject to and in accordance with their own terms and conditions. Dragoman accepts no liability for any action or activity undertaken by the client which is arranged independently of Dragoman while on tour. Crew may take part in an optional activity but do so as private individuals and not as company representatives.

Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time.

Ensure that you use the appropriate equipment on optional activities, including life jackets, helmets, etc. This is especially important on activities such as horse riding, white-water rafting, etc.

Always ensure that your travel medical insurance covers you for all included and optional activities that you wish to participate in.

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## Included Activities

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

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## Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated - again, these prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator - any prices listed are a guide only and certainly cannot be guaranteed.

Optional activities are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Dragoman nor included in the price of this trip. If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

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## 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.

We recommend that any policy has a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £5,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000 (or the full cost of your trip). Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones, ipods, etc. Please note that Dragoman is not responsible for your personal effects and is not insured for their loss. Please note that you should be insured for trip postponement or cancellation purposes immediately upon paying a

deposit.

Whatever policy you choose, you must ensure that it is designed for adventure/overland travel and make sure it covers any activity that you intend to undertake (whether included or optional). As such it must cover you for adventure activities such as white water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc., and that the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries - for example, that they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or if you were trekking in the Andes. On activities or side trips that are not recommended by us, please ensure you are happy with the safety of the activity before participating.

Please note that in the case of credit card travel insurance we will require details of the participating insurer, the insurance policy number and emergency contact number prior to travel rather than just the bank's name and credit card details. It is up to you to ensure that these policies have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not able to cope with adventure travel to remote areas and many are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

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## **Our Liability Insurance**

Dragoman has comprehensive passenger vehicle liability protection and tour operator insurance. These policies have total indemnities of £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 per incident respectively. This is in addition to local vehicle insurance and your personal travel insurance.

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## **Out of Office Hours Contact**

We have an out of office hours number you can call which should only be used once you have left your home country to start the trip 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 you can not get through please leave a message with you name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you.

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.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

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## **Luggage & Kit List**

Although you will not have to carry your main bag for 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 truck's back locker which will be inaccessible during a drive day, 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. Please be aware that due to the constant dust and vibrations your luggage bag will be subject to extreme wear and tear.

The size of baggage that can be brought on this tour is limited by the locker space on the truck. We recommend that your bag be no larger than a large rucksack with a capacity of about 80 litres (approximately 70cm high, 40cm wide, and 40cm deep). The weight limit for luggage on all trucks is a maximum of 20kg.

Your 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 if your trip includes camping nights.

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 that even when it's warm during the day, it can often get cold at night, particularly in desert regions.

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

### **General**

- Sleeping bag, sleeping bag liner, sleeping mat and small pillow – if your trip includes camping nights
- Sandals or flip flops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm sweater or fleece
- Swimwear
- Comfortable travelling clothes and a set of casual but smart clothes for evenings out
- If visiting places of worship on the trip, men should bring a pair of full length trousers and women should bring a skirt that covers their knees and a scarf
- Towel – quick dry, lightweight travel towels are best
- Toiletries including bio degradable wet wipes, sanitary products, hand gel, sun cream and insect repellent
- Day pack – essential for keeping things handy when on the truck, on short hikes, walking around cities, etc
- Assorted dry bags – to protect your kit from dust and damp
- Pouch or money belt
- Water bottle (at least 1 litre) – we carry drinking water on all of our trucks and actively encourage our customers to use the water supplied. Whilst away from the truck we encourage the use of a filter water bottle and we are able to offer Dragoman customers a 25% discount on Water to Go bottles and filters using the code DRAGOMAN25 on the link <https://www.watertogo.eu/dragoman>
- Head torch with spare batteries and bulbs
- Camera with spare battery and extra memory cards
- Electrical accessories such as charger, power bank, adapter, etc
- Carbon monoxide detector
- A good book, a diary or notebook and pen, a fun game for travel days
- Personal medical kit – see notes below

### **Cold weather**

For trips going through mountainous areas, deserts, high altitude regions and Patagonia, you should be prepared for cold weather, especially at night. Ensure you bring:

- 3/4 or 4/5 season sleeping bag with liner – see note on sleeping bag ratings below
- Thermal base layers
- Winter jacket
- Hat, gloves and scarf
- Warm socks

### **Hot weather**

For trips going through tropical areas you should be prepared for hot and humid weather. Ensure you bring:

- Loose fitting clothes with long sleeves and legs
- Mosquito repellent
- Mosquito net – not essential as our tents have mosquito netting but can be handy for hotels and hostels or sleeping under the stars

### **Trips with trekking**

For trips including treks, ensure you bring:

- Lightweight walking clothes suitable for the general climate

- Waterproof trousers
- Sturdy walking boots
- Walking stick(s) – not essential but can help in steep terrain; sticks can generally be hired or purchased en route

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## Sleeping Bags

A sleeping bag's rating typically indicates the lowest temperature at which it will keep the average sleeper warm enough to sustain them but not necessarily make them warm enough to feel comfortable. For example, with a 0°C bag, you should be able to stay in 0°C temperature but you will not necessarily be able to sleep comfortably.

For European sleeping bags there are the following standards:

- The upper limit is the highest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is able to have a comfortable night's sleep without excess sweating.
- The comfort rating is based on a 'standard' adult woman having a comfortable night's sleep.
- The lower limit is based on the lowest temperature at which a 'standard' adult man is deemed to be able to have a comfortable night's sleep.
- The extreme rating is a survival-only rating for a 'standard' adult man. This is an extreme survival rating only and it is not advisable to rely on this rating for general use.

The transition zone, in between the comfort and lower temperature, is usually considered as the best purchase guideline.

## Personal Medical Kit

All of our trucks have a standard motorist's first aid kit on board for use in emergency situations only. The first aid kit is in compliance with UK standards for first aid provision within motor vehicles, and contain supplies to treat road side injuries. We do not carry prescription medications, 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 travel medical kits. They have been designed in conjunction with the truck kits and contain everything you would need for any minor incidents and health issues. For more details please visit their website:

**Global Survival Kit** - <http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2712/Global-Survival-Kit>

**Ultimate Medical Kit (POM)** - [http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-\(POM\)](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/p/2909/Ultimate-Medical-Kit-(POM))

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## Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of your 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 your trip. If you change your passport, please remember to inform us as soon as possible - however, please be aware that changing your passport can cause big problems if you need to apply for visas or permits (such as the Inca Trail or Gorilla Trekking) in advance.

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## Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Airport Transfers

At Dragoman we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the 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 that 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.

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## Continuing Your Trip

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

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## 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 will be required to contribute the additional costs involved 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.

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## Responsible Tourism

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 from the link below:

<https://www.dragoman.com/about-us/responsible-travel/policy-and-guidelines>

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## Water

The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in the bottle, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 litres 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 sterilised water stored in the purpose-built storage tank on 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 pocket!

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## Electrical Equipment

Your vehicle will be usually equipped with a 12-Volt socket, so to charge your iPod, MP3 player, camera, laptop and mobile phone you will need a DC 12V 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 adapter for your specific charger.

For mobile phones, please note that most countries in the Americas operate at 850 MHz and 1900 MHz which is not the same frequencies used in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. Most modern tri-band and quad-band mobile phones will be able to operate on these frequencies but please check your mobile phone specifications before travelling to ensure that you'll be able to use your phone in the Americas.

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## A Few Rules

It is one of our core values to treat all people we encounter with respect, including the local people who make our destinations so special. We have therefore set down a number of rules to which our customers must adhere.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, carrying weapons, or engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

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## 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.

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## 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 USD 1 to USD 4 per person per day, but check with your crew for an appropriate amount.

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## Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

## COUNTRY SPECIFIC NOTES

### TURKMENISTAN NOTE

Please note that any additional accommodation in Turkmenistan must be booked through Dragoman due to the strict controls on foreigners in the country - it is essential that everyone is registered immediately upon their entry to Turkmenistan at accommodation booked by the agent on your visa Letter of Invitation, as such it is not possible to independently arrange your own accommodation here. It is also now compulsory for all passengers arriving into Turkmenistan through Ashgabat airport to be met on arrival by an official representative from our local supplier and have a confirmed transfer to their hotel. These transfers can be booked directly through your sales agent. If you do not have a confirmed transfer upon arrival you may be refused entry into Turkmenistan.

Due to strict Turkmenistan Laws, foreigners are not permitted to travel outside of Ashgabat without being accompanied by an official guide from a registered company. If travelling on a Dragoman Trip and you wish to explore Turkmenistan further any additional time must be booked through our registered supplier as a private tour and we must be notified at the time of booking as it is not possible to travel with 2 different company's in the same visit. Any Additional nights in Turkmenistan must also be booked at a registered hotel in Ashgabat.

Please also note that there are strict laws against tobacco products in Turkmenistan. Whilst it is not yet completely illegal to possess tobacco, it is strictly prohibited to smoke in any public place, is illegal to sell tobacco, and is illegal to import more than 2 small packs of cigarettes. Breaking these laws even slightly can lead to large fines and even detention in jail. To be safe, it is highly recommended to simply not bring any tobacco products into Turkmenistan and avoiding their use entirely until you have left the country. All the above also applies to vaping, e-cigarettes, etc. Your crew may insist on such material being disposed of before entering through the country on the overland truck, and your co-operation with this is both appreciated and expected.

### KYRGYZSTAN NOTE

We will be travelling through high remote mountains and the itinerary may have to vary somewhat due to weather or road conditions. When it is too cold to visit Song Köl Lake or camp (May to mid June, October and November) we will run an alternative itinerary which may include a yurt stay on the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, a night at a homestay or a night at a hot spring development known as Altyn Arashan.

We will need to remain flexible with these itineraries as temperatures can vary.

In general, the summer months (June, July and August) can be warm during the day but temperatures can drop to 0°C at night. For this reason we recommend taking warm clothes and a warm sleeping bag for ALL trips in Kyrgyzstan. For trips that run during the colder months (May to mid June and September to October/November) we recommend you bring extra warm clothing and an all-season sleeping bag as it is not uncommon for temperatures to fall to -10C, sometimes colder.

We recommend you check local average weather conditions for each country you will be travelling to in order to properly prepare for your trip.

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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 16/09/2019