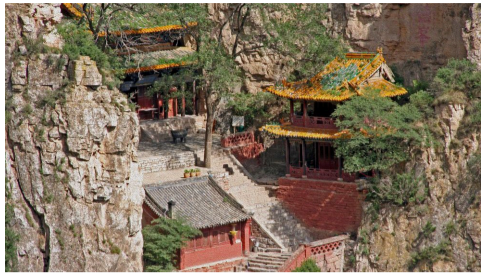


# CENTRAL ASIAN EXPLORER, (EUX)

Istanbul to Xi'an 89 Days, departing 22nd June 2021



## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

**Route:** Istanbul to Xi'an

**Duration:** 89 Days

**Transport:** Overland Expedition Vehicle, Private Bus, Overnight Boat, Jeep, Russian Bus, Local Bus, Boat

**Accommodation:** Comfortable Hotel 21 nights  
Multishare Hostel 5 nights  
Camping without facilities 8 nights  
Basic Hotel 26 nights  
Guesthouse 8 nights  
Wild Camp 7 nights  
Homestay 8 nights  
Overnight Boat 1 night  
Yurt Camp 4 nights

**Meals:** Breakfasts x 53, Lunches x 17, Dinners x 30

**Physical Challenge:**

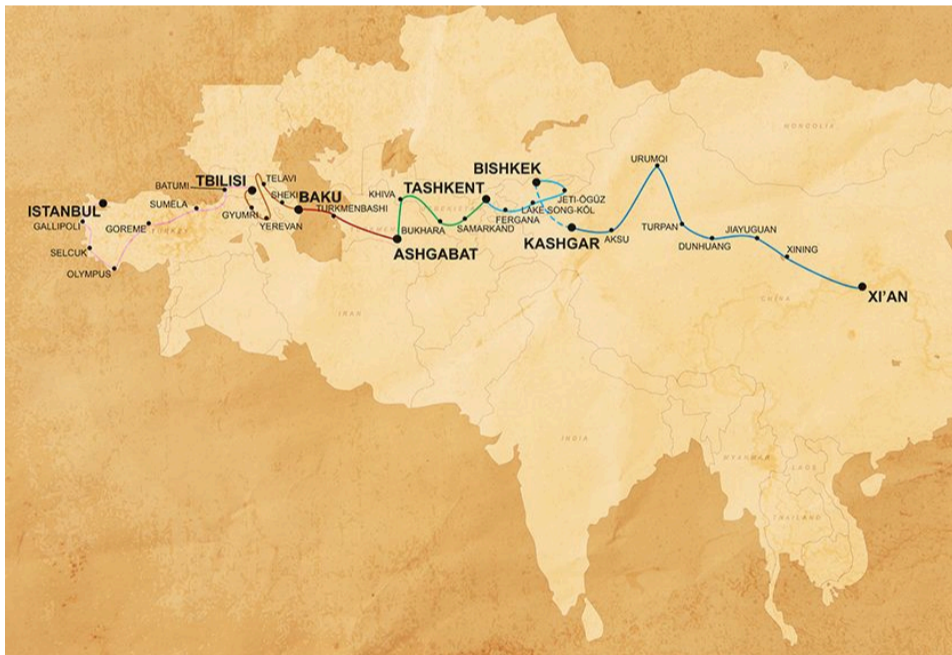


Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours at altitude or across hilly terrain, multi-day treks at sea level, horseback riding, canoeing and other adventurous activities. A moderate level of fitness is required.

**Lifestyle Challenge:**



This is a fairly challenging trip; you may well be travelling at high altitudes, across deserts or through cold and windy or hot and steamy areas. The terrain and roads may be rough and the facilities can be very basic or non-existent. There may be some long drive days followed by wild camps, and physically and mentally it can be tough, but there will be some rest days and time to relax as well.



# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1 - Istanbul (22nd June 2021)

**Border Information:** If joining in Istanbul, you will most likely enter Turkey at Istanbul Ataturk Airport (IATA code: IST).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10.00am - on arrival please look out for a note from your leader with more information about this important meeting. If you are travelling beyond Tbilisi, your tour leader will need to carefully check your visa situation for your entire trip.

The afternoon will be free to explore the many sights of the incredible exotic city of Istanbul, including the Grand Bazaar, the Bosphorus River, Hagia Sophia and the phenomenal Blue Mosque!

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Istanbul 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 Istanbul.

*\* 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. \**

Accommodation: Golden Horn Istanbul Hotel

## Day 2 - Gallipoli (23rd June 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning following breakfast we will depart Istanbul and begin our journey to the shores of Gallipoli.

After lunch we will get an insight into what happened between the ANZAC, Allied and Turkish forces during the first World War and have a guided tour of the Battlefields and Anzac Cove.

## Day 3 - Selcuk (24th June 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will cross the Dardenelles by ferry and head to Selcuk where we will do a short tour of the Troy Ruins.

We will then continue onto Selcuk where we will be staying for two nights. In the evening we will have free time to explore the area or simply relax in one of the many cafes or tea bars which are great for people watching.

## Day 4 - Selcuk (25th June 2021)

Today we will have a full day to be able to explore the Ephesus Ruins and Terraced Houses.

## Day 5 - Pamukkale (26th June 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Following breakfast we will drive inland towards the small village of Pamukkale.

After lunch we will have free time to visit the thermal hot springs and traverse through the travertine pools and terraces.

## Day 6 - Olympos (27th June 2021)

**Meals:** Dinner

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Today we continue our drive south and aim to reach the popular beach town of Olympos by lunchtime.

This evening we will walk up to the Chimera Fire Mountain and toast some marshmallows

## Day 7 - Olympos (28th June 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today we will have time to explore and participate in any optional activities if you wish or simply take a dip in the cool turquoise waters on one of the many beaches.

## Day 8 - Egirdir (29th June 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we will leave the beachside town of Olympos and make our way north.

We will have an included visit of Termessos on the way before continuing our journey towards Egirdir where we will find a good spot to bush camp for the night. Depending on the time of year we may also stay in a local guesthouse.

### Day 9 - Goreme (30th June 2021)

We have an early start this morning to reach the small enchanting town of Goreme in the heart of the Cappadocia mountains.

In Goreme we will stay in a well-equipped hostel - please note that dorm beds are generally used here.

### Day 10 - Goreme (1st July 2021)

Today will be a full day to explore Goreme, including a guided tour of the enchanted valley of Cappadocia. There will also be an opportunity for a magical optional balloon ride over the valley during your time here.. Weather permitting.

### Day 11 - Zara (2nd July 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we continue our journey east with a full day's drive towards the Sumela monastery.

We will break the journey with a wild camp near Zara or the village of Alucra.

### Day 12 - Sumela (3rd July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we will reach the Sumela Monastery near the town of Macka, which we will visit in the afternoon if it is open.

We will camp overnight in a campsite near Sumela if conditions allow. Or we may opt to stay in a local hotel in Macka or Trabzon.

### Day 13 - Batumi (4th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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**Border Information:** Exit Turkey at Sarp, enter Georgia at Sarpi.

This morning we will continue to the border and cross into Georgia, reaching the port town of Batumi.

### Day 14 - Kutaisi (5th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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After a relaxing morning, we leave the port town of Batumi behind us and make our way to the ancient town of Kutaisi. This afternoon we will visit the medieval Bagrati Cathedral and the Gelati monastery.

### Day 15 - Tbilisi (6th July 2021)

**Border Information:** if joining in Tbilisi, you will most likely enter Georgia at Tbilisi International Airport (IATA code: TBS).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 6.00pm - please meet at the joining hotel reception at this time. Please do not be alarmed if there is no note from your leader on arrival, as this is often a travelling day for the crew and they will not arrive until about 4.00pm.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Tbilisi 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 Tbilisi.

*\*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.\**

## Day 16 - Tbilisi (7th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will visit the beautiful old town of Tbilisi and visit sites including the National Museum, Sioni Cathedral and the Metekhi Temple.

## Day 17 - Lake Sevan (8th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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This morning we will have a short drive to the border and cross into the country of Armenia. Once the formalities are over we will continue on through the beautiful Dilijan National Park stopping for a truck lunch along the way.

Tonight we will either stay in the National Park or continue on to Lake Sevan where we will camp for the night

## Day 18 - Yerevan (9th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we will leave the sparkling waters of Lake Sevan behind and make our way towards the city of Yerevan. On the way we will visit 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 finally arriving at our destination.

## Day 19 - Yerevan (10th July 2021)

We have a free day today to explore the stunning city of Yerevan. Simply spend the time relaxing and soaking up the city atmosphere or perhaps do a walking tour of the city admiring the soviet architecture.

## Day 20 - Armenian Highlands (11th July 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we leave the city of Yerevan. We will start off with a visit to the Khor Virap Monastery before we begin to make our way north through the beautiful Armenian Highland.

Tonight we will wild camp in the Northern Armenian Highlands.

## Day 21 - Borjomi-Kharagauli NP (12th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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After packing up camp we continue north and head towards the Georgian border. We aim to arrive after lunch and if time permits have an included visit to the Vardzia Caves. If we arrive too late we will be able to explore the caves tomorrow morning also.

Tonight we will find a wild camp in the valley close to the caves.

## Day 22 - Mtskheta (13th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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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.

We will then continue on to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia. Whilst here we will explore the 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral.

## Day 23 - Stepantsminda (14th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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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.

## Day 24 - Telavi (15th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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This morning we will drive to the Alazani valley and on to Telavi, where we will base ourselves for 2 days to explore the area.

### Day 25 - Telavi (16th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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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.

### Day 26 - Lagodekhi (17th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today we leave the wine region behind us as we make our way towards the Azerbaijan border. We will visit the Gremi citadel en route.

We will wild camp tonight, most likely in the Lagodekhi National Park close to the Azeri border.

### Day 27 - Sheki (18th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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

Today we cross the border to Azerbaijan and continue to the old town of Sheki, where we can visit the exquisite Khan's Palace.

### Day 28 - Lahij Village (19th July 2021)

This morning we will continue on to Lahic Village. An old coppersmiths village, nestled in the mountains.

### Day 29 - Baku (20th July 2021)

We will continue our journey this morning to 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.

This afternoon we will continue on to the Old City of Baku where we will have free time on arrival to explore.

### Day 30 - Baku (21st July 2021)

**Border Information:**

For everyone that is continuing with us onto Turkmenistan there will be short group meeting at 10.00am to explain the next few days until Ashgabat. Your leader will also collect the kitty for this linking section.

Please note the new ferry port has now moved to Alat a town south of Baku. Depending on ferry departures we may need to stay here the night instead of Baku limiting our time to explore the town of Baku.

Our itinerary in Baku 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!

### Day 31 - Caspian Sea (22nd July 2021)

From Alat/ Baku, we will take the ferry across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan. The boat docks at the city of Turkmenbashi.

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 very unpredictable, as it is often forced to wait outside of the port in Turkmenbashi while they arrange the unloading of the cargo on the boat.

There will be seats on the ferry overnight. Generally cabins are not available for passengers.

## Day 32 - Turkmenbashi (23rd July 2021)

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

Today we hope to disembark the Caspian ferry and enter Turkmenistan.

We will be either staying at a local hotel in Turkmenbashi or we will start our journey towards Ashgabat and wild camp en route.

**Turkemenistan Visa Note** - as the timing of the Caspian ferry crossing can be very unpredictable, please get your Turkmenistan visa issued with at least 2 'flexible' days before the entry date listed on these notes. Please see the detailed visa notes below.

## Day 33 - Ashgabat (24th July 2021)

Today we will have an included tour of the city of Ashgabat using local mini buses.

## Day 34 - Ashgabat (25th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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**Border Information:** if joining in Ashgabat, you will most likely enter Turkmenistan at Ashgabat International Airport (IATA code: ASB).

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.

After the meeting we will have an included tour of the city of Ashgabat using local minibuses.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Ashgabat 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 Ashgabat. If arriving at Ashgabat airport you will also need to have a confirmed arrival transfer and representative from our local supplier to meet you at the airport. Please contact your sales agent for prices and to book.

*\*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.\**

## Day 35 - Darvaza (26th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we set off north from Ashgabat and head into 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.

## Day 36 - Kunye Urgench (27th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we will continue our overland journey north across the Karakum. We will visit the Kunye Urgench ruins towards the end of the day.

## Day 37 - Khiva (28th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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

This morning we will visit the markets in the border town of Dashoguz, before driving across the border into Uzbekistan and continue to the beautiful historic town of Khiva.

## Day 38 - Khiva (29th July 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we have a guided tour of the ancient city of Khiva. In the afternoon we will have plenty of free time to further explore this wonderfully preserved Khanate town.

### Day 39 - Bukhara (30th July 2021)

Today we will have a full day's drive to the fascinating city of Bukhara, where we will spend the next 3 nights.

### Day 40 - Bukhara (31st July 2021)

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.

### Day 41 - Bukhara (1st August 2021)

Spend the day exploring this incredible historic city and its surroundings further and soaking up the atmosphere.

### Day 42 - Kyzylkhum Desert (2nd August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

---

Today we will drive into the Kyzylkhum Desert near the town of Nurata. In the afternoon we will have the opportunity to head out on an optional camel ride into the desert!

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

### Day 43 - Samarkand (3rd August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning we will spend some time exploring the Nurata Hills with the option of taking a dip in Lake Ajdar Kul. After lunch we will drive to Samarkand where we will stay for the next 3 nights.

### Day 44 - Samarkand (4th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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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.

### Day 45 - Samarkand (5th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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We will have a free day today with the chance to wander the streets and delve into this beautiful city and its history further.

### Day 46 - Tashkent (6th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning we will have a little more free time to explore more of Samarkand. After lunch we will drive to the Uzbek capital of Tashkent.

### Day 47 - Tashkent (7th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

---

Today we will have a free day to explore Tashkent.

### Day 48 - Tashkent (8th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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**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.

The rest of the day is free to explore the Uzbek capital.

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.

*\*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!\**

## Day 49 - Fergana Valley (9th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning we travel in local transport over the Kamchik Pass 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 to Fergana.

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

## Day 50 - Arslanbob (10th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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

This morning we leave Uzbekistan behind and make our way into the magical mountain kingdom of Kyrgyzstan!

Once we have crossed the border we continue our journey to Arslanbob in Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley - if we are delayed at the border we may choose to stay in the closer town of Jalalabad instead.

## Day 51 - Arslanbob (11th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we have a free day to explore the local area. There will be options to do an all day hike to a big waterfall or alternatively do an optional horseride through the Walnut Forest

## Day 52 - Kyrgyz Fergana Valley (12th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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We will spend the next 2 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. Tonight we will find a wild camp close to Toktugal Lake. 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.

## Day 53 - Kyrgyz Fergana Valley (13th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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We will have another day of scenic driving as we make our way to our second wild camp at Karakuchi Gorge

## Day 54 - Son-Kol Lake (14th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today we complete the 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 and horse-riding.

*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.*

## Day 55 - Son-Kol Lake (15th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

---

We will have free time in Song Kul Lake today to explore the area, and to enjoy some optional activities including hiking and horse-riding.

## Day 56 - Kochkor (16th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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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!

## Day 57 - Jetti-Oguz Valley (17th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we drive along the southern shore of Lake Issyk Köl and up into the mountains to the alpine trekking region of Jetti Oguz. En route we will have an included demonstration from a local 'eagle hunter'.

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!

*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 stay for 1 night in a local hotel at the base of Jetti Oguz Valley (allowing time for some day walks) and then move via 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.*

## Day 58 - Jetti-Oguz Valley (18th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

---

Today is a free day where we will have the chance to hike in the incredible scenery around Jetti Oguz, or take an optional horse ride with some of the local nomads!

## Day 59 - Karakol (19th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will move on from Jetti Oguz or Altyn Arashan to the Russian-style town of Karakol, where we will have a free afternoon to explore and relax!

## Day 60 - Chong Kemin Valley (20th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

---

Today we will drive to the northern shore of Lake Issyk Köl and visit the ancient petroglyphs at Cholpon Ata. We will then continue to the beautiful area of Chong Kemin where we will spend 2 nights.

In Chong Kemin 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.

## Day 61 - Chong Kemin Valley (21st August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

---

We will spend another night in Chong Kemin today and will have free time to explore and hike in this stunning area,

or to get involved in an optional white water rafting excursion!

## Day 62 - Bishkek (22nd August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

---

Today we have a short drive to the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, with the opportunity to visit the Burana Tower en route. We will have free time to relax and explore the city upon arrival.

## Day 63 - Bishkek (23rd August 2021)

For everyone that is continuing with us to China, there will be quick pre-departure meeting at 10:00am in order to explain the next 6 days until Kashgar, and your leader will collect the kitty for this linking section.

The remainder of the day is free to explore the relaxed and atmospheric city of Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

Hotel for the night: Hotel Asia Mountains

Hotel Asia Mountains

1a Lineinaja St

Bishkek 720021

Kyrgyzstan

Tel: +996 312 694 075

## Day 64 - Kochkor (24th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

---

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!

*Please note that if the group has no new people joining in Bishkek, we may choose to stay instead in a guesthouse in the small town of Naryn (a further 2 hour drive beyond Kochkor). This is so that we don't repeat Kochkor unnecessarily and can have more time to explore the area of Tash Rabat the following day.*

## Day 65 - Tash Rabat (25th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we continue our journey south 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.

## Day 66 - Kashgar (26th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

---

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

Today we will have a full day drive over the 3752m Torugart Pass, crossing into China and heading down to the Uighur city of Kashgar.

## Day 67 - Kashgar (27th August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

---

Today we will have free time to explore the city of Kashgar and partake in any optional activities whilst we wait for our paperwork and documents to be processed with the border formalities

## Day 68 - Kashgar (28th August 2021)

### Border Information:

if joining in Kashgar, you will most likely enter China at Kashgar Airport (IATA code: KHG).

Welcome to Kashgar, one of the ancient trading posts on the Silk Route! If you are joining in Kashgar, you are free to explore the city, and there will be a group meeting today at 6:00pm. Please do not be alarmed if there is no welcome note at the hotel on your arrival, as this is often a travelling day for the tour leader and they will often arrive in Kashgar mid-afternoon.

Please note that many of the optional activities will only be possible for those with extra time in Kashgar 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 Kashgar.

## Day 69 - Kashgar (29th August 2021)

Today we will visit the animal market just outside of town, and then the famous Kashgar Sunday Bazaar. We will also have an included visit to Shiptons Arch - the largest natural arch in the world!

## Day 70 - Kashgar (30th August 2021)

Today we will have a free day to explore the town, the central Id Kah Mosque and its surrounding square, while your crew finalise the customs procedures for our truck to continue further into China.

## Day 71 - Aksu (31st August 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Our journey through China begins as we leave Kashgar and head east through the Taklamakan Desert! Our crossing of the desert usually takes 3 days/2 nights, and we plan to stay in local hotels en route.

*Please note that due to 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, staying in a local hotel in between - in this case we will have 1 less night in Pingliang towards the end of the trip.*

## Day 72 - Korle (1st September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

---

We continue our drive through the great Taklamakan Desert.

## Day 73 - Urumqi (2nd September 2021)

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

## Day 74 - Urumqi (3rd September 2021)

On the second day in Urumqi we will have an included visit to Heavenly Lake to enjoy the incredible scenery in the Tian Shan Mountains and walk around the lake.

## Day 75 - Turpan (4th September 2021)

Today we will travel to the oasis town of Turpan, where we stay for 2 nights.

## Day 76 - Turpan (5th September 2021)

On our next day in Turpan there is time for exploring the surrounding sites, including the famous Jiaohe ruins.

## Day 77 - Dunhuang (6th September 2021)

Today we will have an early start and a big drive to the city of Dunhuang.

*Please note that due to 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, staying in a local hotel in between - in this case we will have 1 less night in Pingliang towards the end of the trip.*

## Day 78 - Dunhuang (7th September 2021)

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!

## Day 79 - Jiayuguan (8th September 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we continue our journey with a drive to Jiayuguan, where we will have an included visit to the Jiayuguan Fort - the most western point of the Great Wall of China. Please note the Great Wall in this area is adobe, unlike the more famous stone sections further to the east.

## Day 80 - Zhangye (9th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we will drive to the incredible Zhangye Danxia Rainbow Mountains - we'll spend some time exploring the region before heading off to find a place to camp.

## Day 81 - Liujiaxia (10th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will drive onto the lower slopes of the remote Tibetan plateau and reach the small city of Liujiaxia.

## Day 82 - Xiahe (11th September 2021)

Today we set off to the enchanting Tibetan town of Xiahe where we spend the next 3 nights. We will have an included visit to the incredible Bingling Si Buddha Caves en route.

## Day 83 - Xiahe (12th September 2021)

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.

## Day 84 - Xiahe (13th September 2021)

On your second free day there may also be a chance to go trekking, cycling or exploring the surrounding grasslands, visiting Tibetan families and perhaps trying the local Yak butter tea.

## Day 85 - Lanzhou (14th September 2021)

Today we will leave Xiahe and head to the chaotic capital city of Gansu province, Lanzhou. We will have some free time this evening to explore the city.

## Day 86 - Pingliang (15th September 2021)

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

## Day 87 - Pingliang (16th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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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.

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

## Day 88 - Xi'an (17th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will journey 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 afternoon to fully explore the city, its famous walls, bell and drum towers, pagodas and Muslim Quarter.

## Day 89 - Xi'an (18th September 2021)

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

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.

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Xi'an. 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.

Accommodation:

## ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and 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. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

### Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, 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.

### Accommodation and Meals Included

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

### 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. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. 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. The 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, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in 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. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

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

## A FEW RULES

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

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, or carrying weapons 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.

# 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.

# IMPORTANT NOTES

## OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE

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! For more details of how an overlanding trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

## SAFETY STANDARDS

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. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, 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.

## VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

# 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 [download our AMS information sheet](#) or refer to the following website: [www.high-altitude-medicine.com](http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com). If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival. 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.

**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.**

## EXPLORATORY TRIP WARNING - THIS IS A NEW TRIP FOR US!

Please note that all or part of this trip is a brand new itinerary, and is going through completely new areas for Dragoman. This is what we call an Exploratory trip, and it means that all the passengers on this trip will be the route's pioneers for the first season!

While we have thoroughly researched all aspects of this new route and put the itinerary together with the best of intentions, please note that your crew will be finding a lot of information out for us on the ground and will be playing a lot of things by ear. The itinerary may be altered in places where it becomes necessary and the drive times may differ significantly from the published estimates.

Most Exploratory trips will have slight or significant changes made to them after this first season, and frankly we would be very surprised if an Exploratory trip was to run perfectly to the published itinerary. Usually we find that this is rarely a problem but rather an exciting feature and that there are much more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones. You will be immersing in to the camaraderie with your crew and fellow travellers and give you the fantastic opportunity to shape the trip as a group.

However, the warning is sincere and this trip must be viewed as Exploratory - if this concerns you or you would rather stick to a tried-and-tested itinerary, then we recommend that you wait a year or two until we have this itinerary perfected following operating it many times, or of course to consider one of the more established trips in our extensive portfolio.

There will be numerous challenges on this trip including border delays, visa and paperwork delays, potential re-routing at short notice, lack of western facilities, road closures and other obstacles and unforeseen issues.

There is a risk of cancellation if the FCDO advise changes (as of now the route is safe to travel all the way through).

West and Central Africa will test everyone's patience due to potential issues with obtaining visas. This is likely to lead to long delays in places where there may not be much to do. It may also be necessary to fly over some places which would be at your own expense.

This trip will have a higher level of participation compared to our other Dragoman trips and you will be required to help out with setting up camps, cooking etc. The campsites are also likely to be basic for much of the trip along with a high number of bush camps.

This will be a challenging trip and you must be fit in order to participate. If you have a pre-existing medical condition or any medical concerns you should check with your doctor prior to travel that this would be a suitable trip for you. You should also be aware that in the event of accident or illness, access to medical centres will be limited.

On the flip side, we'll be visiting regions and areas very rarely seen by Western travellers. Meeting people who have perhaps never seen foreigners. Enjoying the chaotic and buzzing cultures of West and Central Africa. And of course, the immense satisfaction of completing a classic adventure that only a handful of people ever get the chance to complete.

## 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-psychootropic-substances.html>

It is very important that you do not bring any such medications as the customs officials will treat this as though you were trying to bring illegal narcotics into the country. The rules are strict; 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. 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 allow you to travel on a Central Asia trip if you refuse to dispose of such medicines or refuse to cooperate 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.

## TURKEY NOTES

## GEORGIA NOTES

## AZERBAIJAN NOTES

## ARMENIA NOTES

## TURKMENISTAN 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.

## UZBEKISTAN NOTES

## KYRGYZSTAN NOTES

### 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.

## CHINA NOTES

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 29th November 2020**