

Tour Alexander the Great in Central Asia

Duration: 13 days

You will visit: Dushanbe, Lake Iskanderkul, Istaravshan, Khujand, Tashkent, Samarkand, Nurata Mountains, Nurata, Gijduvan, Bukhara, Merv, Ashgabat.

Web version of the tour

<https://www.orexca.com/central-asia/tours/alexander-the-great-central-asia-tour.htm>

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Dushanbe (Tajikistan)

Arrive in Dushanbe and be met by your driver for a transfer to the hotel. Start your city tour in the vibrant capital and largest city of Tajikistan. Dushanbe City Tour begins with a drive to the Hissar Historical and Cultural Reserve (25 km), a site that witnessed centuries of history, including the legendary march of Alexander the Great through Central Asia:

- Hissar Fortress (15th century), where the impressive gates of a castle, once the home of a Bukharin emir, still amaze with their stateliness;
- Kukhna Madrasah (17th century), a spacious religious school that functioned until the early 20th century, it now contains a small history museum;
- Khistin Caravanserai (19th century), an unusual caravanserai constructed of burnt brick. The site also includes a mosque and an additional madrasah.

Drive back to Dushanbe to continue your tour:

- National Museum of Tajikistan, housed in a striking 4-storey building with more than 40,000 exhibits covering Tajikistan's history, nature and art, including a 12-meter statue of Buddha discovered on Tajikistan territory;
- Continue your tour with Haji Yaqub Mosque (19th century), Dushanbe's landmark mosque that can hold up to 3,000 people;
- Rudaki Park, a beautifully kept park filled with fountains, flowers and manicured foliage, with a tasteful monument of Rudaki in the center;
- Statue of Ismail Somoni, an elegant monument to the founder of the Tajik people, standing 25 meters high in the city center;
- Mehrgon Market, one of Dushanbe's newest attractions, this large indoor bazaar is housed in an ornately designed and decorated atrium.

Return to hotel. Overnight in Dushanbe.

Meals: none

Day 2: Dushanbe – Iskanderkul Lake (Tajikistan)

In the morning, drive to Iskanderkul Lake (130 km, 3 hrs), enjoying the beautiful scenery of towering red-tinted mountains along the way. The drive along the M34 highway continues through the Anzob Pass, which runs 3,400 m above sea level and is considered the best vantage point for the Fann Mountains. Spend the afternoon at legendary Iskanderkul Lake (Lake of Alexander the Great), with free time to walk around, take photos, dip your feet in the water, or simply rest by its calm shores. A short hike leads to the 38-meter-high Fann Niagara Waterfall, where an observation deck gives you an unobstructed view of the falls. Overnight in Iskanderkul Lake guesthouse.

Meals: breakfast, dinner

Day 3: Iskanderkul Lake – Istaravshan – Khujand (Tajikistan)

Depart from Iskanderkul Lake and drive to Khujand (220 km, 4-5 hrs) via Istaravshan. Arrive in Istaravshan and have lunch at a teahouse before beginning your city tour of Istaravshan's most popular sites: Istaravshan Bazaar, Hazrat Shah Architectural Complex (18th–19th centuries), Mug Teppe – a renovated fortress perched atop a hill marking the location of one of the oldest habitations in Istaravshan. Continue driving to Khujand. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel and enjoy free time in the evening. Overnight in Alexandria Eschate – modern Khujand city.

Meals: breakfast

Day 4: Khujand – Border Crossing – Tashkent (Tajikistan/Uzbekistan)

Start the day in Khujand, one of the most ancient cities of Sogdiana — a region steeped in history and visited by Alexander the Great during his Central Asian campaign. Your tour of this former Silk Road hub includes:

- **Khujand Fortress:** first built in the 5th century BC, rebuilt in the Middle Ages and reconstructed again in recent times, it was one of the most impenetrable castles in Central Asia;
- **Historical Museum of Sughd:** housed in the Khujand Fortress, this museum brings the region's history to life with vivid depictions of Alexander the Great's conquests and artefacts preserved from the territory of historical Sughd;
- **Mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin Khujandi:** This two-storey mausoleum commemorates Sheikh Muslihiddin, a 12th-century ruler and poet. It sits within a memorial complex that includes a mosque, a 20-meter minaret, and several smaller mausoleums;
- **Panjshanbe Bazaar (Thursday Bazaar):** a bright, colourful oriental market, said to be the best in Tajikistan, where you can sample fresh fruit and mingle with shoppers from Khujand and the surrounding villages.

After the sightseeing, transfer to the Oybek cross-border point (70 km, 1 h). Upon completing customs and passport control on both sides, our guide and driver will be waiting with a sign bearing your name. After crossing into Uzbekistan, continue your transfer to Tashkent (100 km, 1 h 30 min). Check in at your hotel. Overnight in Tashkent.

Meals: breakfast

Day 5: Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

After breakfast, your guide and driver will meet you at the hotel for a full day in Tashkent. The tour covers:

- Excursion to the Old City, including the Khazret-Imam Architectural Complex. Also on site are the Madrasah of Barak-Khan (16th century), Tillya-Sheykh Mosque, Juma Mosque and Mausoleum of Saint Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi (15th century);
- Chorsu Bazaar, Tashkent's best-known market, stocked with traditional Uzbek ceramics, jewelry, handbags, garments and more;
- Walk through Amir Timur Square and Independence Square, including the moving Mourning Mother Monument and the Eternal Flame;
- Tour of the Applied Arts Museum, an informative collection of Uzbekistan's finest handicrafts housed in an ornately decorated villa;
- History Museum of Uzbekistan: exhibits trace the development of ancient civilisations in the region, including Sogdiana, Bactria, and Khorezm — territories that formed part of Alexander the Great's eastern campaigns.

After city tour, return to your hotel. Overnight in Tashkent.

Meals: breakfast

Day 6: Tashkent – Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

In the morning, transfer to the railway station and take the train to Samarkand (320 km). On arrival, transfer to the hotel and check in at noon. Your private tour of Samarkand begins in the afternoon – the ancient city once known as Marakanda, visited by Alexander the Great on his campaign through Central Asia, and one of the great crossroads of world culture for centuries:

- Visit to the excavation site and museum of the ancient city Afrasiab;
- Shakhi-Zinda, a burial complex built between the 9th–14th centuries. Climb the blue-tiled path and explore more than 20 small mausoleums that line the broad alleyway;
- Gur Emir, the imposing burial site of Tamerlane and Mirzo Ulugbek;
- Siab Bazaar, a multi-level complex where you can shop for souvenirs and sample sweets, fruits and Samarkand's famous bread;
- Registan Square, the commercial center of Samarkand for centuries and Samarkand's most famous site today. The square includes three madrasahs: Ulugbek Madrasah (15th century), Sher-Dor Madrasah (17th century) and Tilla-Kori Madrasah (17th century).

Transfer back to hotel. Overnight in Samarkand.

Meals: breakfast

Day 7: Samarkand – Nurata Mountains Village (Uzbekistan)

The morning is free to explore Samarkand at your own pace. In the afternoon, transfer to one of several small villages in the Nurata Mountains (230 km, 4 hrs) – remote, picturesque settlements with fresh air, green orchards, and welcoming locals. Walk around the village, get a feel for daily life, and talk with the people who live there. Overnight in guesthouse.

Meals: breakfast, dinner

Day 8: Nurata Mountains Village – Nurata city – Gijduvan – Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

Spend the morning relaxing in the village – go for a hike, ride a donkey, help prepare traditional food, or simply drink tea and read under the shade of a walnut tree. In the afternoon, say goodbye to your host family and drive toward Bukhara. En route, stop in Nurata to visit a local mosque known for its holy spring waters and to explore the ruins of a fortress built by Alexander the Great. Continue to Gijduvan – a small town whose ceramic museum and workshop showcase the city’s famous pottery, prized for centuries for its quality and colorful decorative style (230 km, 4 hrs total). Arrive in Bukhara and check in to your hotel. Overnight in Bukhara.

Meals: breakfast, lunch

Day 9: Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

Have a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, then set out on a private walking tour of Bukhara’s Old City:

- The Lyabi-Hauz ensemble holds the largest artificial reservoir of medieval Bukhara (14th–17th centuries). This ensemble includes some of the largest madrasahs in Bukhara: the Khanaka Madrasah, Kukeldash Madrasah and Nadir Divan Beghi Madrasah (all 16th century);
- The Magoki-Attori Mosque is the oldest mosque in Bukhara (12th century);
- Walk through the four Trade Domes (15th–16th centuries) – Toki-Zargaron, Toki-Sarrofon, Telpak Furushon and Tim Abdullakhan – where travellers have been buying carpets, jewelry and handmade souvenirs for centuries;
- Continue your city tour of Bukhara to the Poi Kalyan Ensemble (12th–16th centuries), consisting of the Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque, Amir-Allimkhan Madrasah and Miri-Arab Madrasah;
- Explore the relatively untouched Ulugbek Madrasah (15th century) and Abdulazizkhan Madrasah (17th century);
- Head to the Ark Fortress (4th century), the ancient center of Bukharin statehood and currently home to a small museum;
- Stop by the Bolo-Khauz Complex, consisting of an artfully decorated 18th century mosque, a minaret and reservoirs that once provided water for the entire city.

Overnight in Bukhara.

Meals: breakfast

Day 10: Bukhara – Border Crossing – Mary (Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan)

After breakfast, transfer to the Farap-Alat cross-border point with Turkmenistan (100 km). Complete border formalities and cross the neutral zone – your guide and driver will be waiting at the exit. Transfer to Mary city (290 km, 5 h). Check in to your hotel and enjoy free time for the rest of the afternoon. Overnight in Mary.

Meals: breakfast

Day 11: Mary – Merv – Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Check out in the morning and drive to Merv (40 km) – one of the great ancient cities of Margiana, a region that saw Alexander the Great's campaigns and later became one of the most important centres on the Silk Road. Explore the historic park of Merv:

- Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum – a masterpiece of medieval architecture commemorating the Seljuk ruler who shaped the region's history;
- Major and Minor Kyz-Kala – ancient fortresses that reveal the defensive scale of Margiana's settlements over the centuries;
- Erk-Kala and Gyaur-Kala – massive citadels that once protected the city, their scale a reminder of just how fiercely Margiana was contested during Alexander's campaigns;
- Keshk Fortress – ruins of a stronghold that played a key role in the region's position as a major Silk Road centre.

Afterwards, transfer to Mary Airport for your evening flight to Ashgabat, the modern capital of Turkmenistan. Transfer to hotel. Overnight stay in Ashgabat.

Meals: breakfast

Day 12: Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Today's Ashgabat city tour with your private local guide and driver covers:

- Old Nisa, an archaeological site just 15 km from the city. Nisa was the capital of the Parthian Empire, founded in the 3rd century BC and in power for nearly 500 years. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site;
- Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia, also known as the Spiritual Mosque or the Gypjak Mosque. It includes a mausoleum with the tombs of former president Turkmenbashy and his immediate family;
- Arch of Neutrality, a 95-meter-high tower topped with a gold statue of former president Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashy) that rotates to face the sun. Ride to the top in a funicular to tour a small museum and enjoy a panoramic view of the city;
- Independence Park, including the yurt-shaped Independence Monument housing the Museum of National Values. The museum is surrounded by lavish fountains, 27 statues of Turkmenistan's key historical figures and a golden sculpture of Niyazov himself;
- National Museum of History, displaying over half a million items from every region of the country, including rare artifacts from ancient times through the Middle Ages.

Overnight in Ashgabat hotel.

Meals: breakfast

Day 13: Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Check out at noon. Free time until your transfer to Ashgabat International Airport.

Meals: breakfast

Inclusions:

- Accommodation based on double/twin room (hotel 10 nights, guesthouse 2 nights);
- Transfers airport and train station pick-ups and drop-offs;
- Transport according the tour program, from/to border and cities;
- Economy class tickets for trains Tashkent – Samarkand;
- Economy class tickets for flight Mary – Ashgabat;
- Entrance fees to sights as per itinerary;
- Meals: 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners;
- Letter of Invitation for Turkmen visa;
- Tour escort guide in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan;
- City tour in Dushanbe, Khujand, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Ashgabat with local guides.

Exclusions:

- Personal expenses and tips;
- Meals not indicated in the program;
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Personal travel insurance;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- All visas and e-visas to Central Asia countries;
- All other charges and services not mentioned under “Inclusions”.

For detailed information and booking, please follow the link:

<https://www.orexca.com/central-asia/tours/alexander-the-great-central-asia-tour.htm>