

Four Stans Central Asia Tour

Duration: 19 days

You will visit: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

Web version of the tour

<https://www.orexca.com/central-asia/tours/four-stans-central-asia-tour.htm>

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)

Welcome to Kyrgyzstan. Arrive in Bishkek, where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Check-in is available from noon.

Begin exploring the highlights of Bishkek, the vibrant capital of Kyrgyzstan. Visit Ala-Too Square, the city's central square with its distinctly Soviet-era atmosphere, and take photographs beneath the towering Kyrgyzstan flag. Stop at the Manas Monument to pay tribute to the country's legendary national hero. Continue to Old Square, home to the Parliament House, and Victory Square, then enjoy a walk through Oak Park and along the tree-lined Erkindik Boulevard. Conclude the city tour with a visit to the Opera and Ballet House, an elegant cultural venue and an important centre for the performing arts.

Overnight in Bishkek.

Meals: none

Day 2: Bishkek – Burana – Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan)

After breakfast at the hotel, set out on an adventure-filled day as you leave the city and head into rural Kyrgyzstan. Your first stop is the small town of Tokmok (80 km), where you will visit the Burana Tower and Museum Complex. The Burana Tower (11th century) is a 25-metre-high minaret, notable for its finely carved exterior, and the only surviving structure of the ancient Silk Road city of Balasagun, now recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nearby, you will see balbals (6th century) - round stone figures used as grave markers and memorial stones for the deceased.

Continue the journey to Cholpon-Ata (180 km). Upon arrival, explore this small town located on the northern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, surrounded by mountain scenery. Visit the Museum of Petroglyphs (500 BC-100 AD), a vast open-air site featuring ancient rock carvings and stone markers. Walk through this open-air gallery, discovering the balbals and petroglyphs scattered across the landscape.

After the tour, transfer to your hotel. The evening is free to enjoy the fresh mountain air, with the option of a walk along the lakeshore or a swim in the naturally warm waters of Issyk-Kul. Overnight in Cholpon-Ata.

Meals: breakfast

Day 3: Cholpon-Ata – Karakol (Kyrgyzstan)

B After breakfast, transfer to Karakol (160 km). En route, enjoy the changing scenery of Grigorevka Gorge, one of the most famous natural attractions in the Issyk-Kul region. There is time for a short walk to take in the wild mountain landscapes and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of this scenic area.

Continue driving to Karakol, a small yet characterful town known for its traditional Russian architecture and several notable landmarks. Visit the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral, an elegant wooden church built in 1895 and still functioning today. Continue to the Dungan Mosque, constructed in 1910 without the use of a single nail, whose colourful design reflects strong Buddhist and Chinese architectural influences.

Overnight in Karakol.

Meal: breakfast

Day 4: Karakol – Jetti-Oguz – Barskoon – Tamga – Kajy-Say (Kyrgyzstan)

After breakfast, drive to Jetti-Oguz Gorge (30min), a scenic canyon surrounded by pine forests and dramatic red sandstone cliffs. Enjoy a leisurely one-hour round-trip hike to the famous rock formations known as the “Seven Bulls” and the “Broken Heart”, named for their distinctive shapes.

Next, transfer with a scenic drive to the Barskoon Gorge (65km), famous for its lush forests, mountain streams, and impressive waterfalls. Enjoy an easy hike to the waterfalls, taking in the cool air and alpine scenery. Complete your day’s journey with a drive to Kajy Sai district on the south shore of Lake Issyk-Kul (50km). Upon arrival, settle in the yurt camp, where you’ll have dinner and a free evening. Overnight in yurt camp.

Meals: breakfast, dinner.

Day 5: Kajy-Say – Skazka Canyon – Bokonbaevo – Kochkor (Kyrgyzstan)

After breakfast, continue the journey through Kyrgyzstan with a short drive of 20 km to Skazka Canyon, also known as Fairy Tale Canyon. Here, wind and time have sculpted vivid red sandstone into imaginative shapes resembling castles, animals, and other fantastical forms.

Later, proceed to the village of Bokonbayevo (30 km), renowned for preserving the ancient tradition of falconry. Meet a local hunter and see a golden eagle or hawk up close, while learning about this UNESCO-listed nomadic heritage.

The journey then continues to Kyzyl-Tuu, a village famous for its skilled craftsmen who build traditional Kyrgyz yurts. Take part in a hands-on experience assembling a yurt, offering a genuine insight into local life and customs. After the visit, drive on to Kochkor (110 km).

Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: breakfast, dinner

Day 6: Kochkor – Son-Kul (Kyrgyzstan)

After breakfast, learn more about traditional Kyrgyz hospitality with a visit to a felt-making workshop, where artisans create beautiful handicrafts using ancient techniques.

Transfer to Son-Kul (125 km), one of the highest lakes in Kyrgyzstan, located at an altitude of 3,016 metres above sea level. This remote setting offers a rare opportunity to experience traditional nomadic life. The journey takes you over the Kalmak Ashu mountain pass, which rises to 3,450 metres above sea level.

Upon arrival, you will have the chance to ride a horse, spot edelweiss flowers, camels, yaks, and golden eagles, and watch how local women prepare the traditional Kyrgyz drink kymyz, made from mare's milk. In this vast and striking landscape, you can see hundreds of grazing herds and numerous yurts scattered across the plateau.

Dinner is served at the camp, followed by a relaxing evening around the campfire. Overnight in a yurt camp.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7: Son Kul – Chon-Kemin (Kyrgyzstan)

Spend some free time enjoying the peaceful views of Son-Kul Lake. Afterwards, travel to the Chon-Kemin Valley (220 km, approximately 4 hours). Along the way, you will be surrounded by striking mountain scenery.

Arrive in Chon-Kemin, a beautiful highland region known for its alpine landscapes and fresh mountain air. Spend the afternoon in the picturesque Chon-Kemin Valley, with the option to go hiking or enjoy a horseback ride to a scenic viewpoint overlooking the valley's dramatic alpine terrain. Overnight in a guesthouse.

Meals: breakfast, dinner

Day 8: Chon-Kemin – Border Crossing – Almaty (Kyrgyzstan/Kazakhstan)

After breakfast, transfer to Almaty (400 km, approximately 6 hours), the former capital of Kazakhstan, travelling via the Korday land border. After completing all customs formalities, arrive in Almaty and check in at the hotel. Free time. Overnight in Almaty.

Meals: breakfast

Day 9: Almaty – Charyn Canyon – Almaty (Kazakhstan)

After breakfast, depart for a full-day excursion to Charyn Canyon (220 km, approximately 3 hours). As you travel through open steppe and mountain landscapes, your guide will share stories and insights into the region's natural history.

Upon arrival, descend into the canyon to reach the banks of the Charyn River. Take time to rest and enjoy the dramatic scenery while learning about the unique ecosystem that surrounds you. Continue walking through the spectacular Valley of Castles, where towering rock formations rise up to 200 metres high and extend for more than two kilometres.

After the excursion, drive back to Almaty. Overnight in Almaty.

Meals: breakfast

Day 10: Almaty – Dushanbe (Kazakhstan/Tajikistan)

After breakfast, check out from the hotel and meet your guide and driver in the lobby to begin a guided city tour of Almaty. Enjoy a walk through the leafy paths of Panfilov Park and visit the iconic Zenkov Cathedral, an architectural masterpiece built entirely of wood without a single metal nail and one of the city's oldest landmarks. Continue to the lively Green Bazaar, where colourful stalls, aromatic spices, and local delicacies offer an authentic glimpse into everyday Kazakh life.

The tour then takes you to Republic Square, a key public space reflecting the country's modern identity. Conclude the city tour with a visit to the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, home to

extensive collections showcasing the history, culture, and traditions of Kazakhstan. Afterwards, take a short drive to Kok-Tobe Hill, which offers panoramic views of Almaty and the surrounding mountains.

In the late afternoon, transfer to Almaty Airport for your flight to Dushanbe (1 hour 40 minutes), the capital of Tajikistan. Upon arrival, meet your driver and transfer to the hotel. Free time. Overnight in Dushanbe.

Meals: breakfast

Day 11: Dushanbe (Tajikistan)

After breakfast, enjoy a guided tour of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, exploring its main landmarks and cultural highlights. Visit the historic Hissar Fortress (15th century), the atmospheric Khishtin Caravanserai (19th century), and the elegant Haji Yaqub Mosque (19th century). Continue to see the iconic Statue of Ismoil Somoni and the towering State Flagpole.

The tour also includes an excursion to the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan, home to an impressive 13-metre-long statue of Buddha discovered on Tajik territory. After the tour, enjoy free time to explore the city at your own pace, visit local cafés or markets, or simply soak up the atmosphere of Tajikistan's vibrant capital. Overnight in Dushanbe.

Meals: breakfast

Day 12: Dushanbe – Istaravshan – Khujand (Tajikistan)

Enjoy a scenic morning drive through picturesque valleys and across the Anzob Pass, one of the best vantage points for panoramic views of the magnificent Fann Mountains. Continue the journey to the northern city of Khujand via Istaravshan.

In Istaravshan, visit the lively Istaravshan Bazaar, the Hazrat Shah Architectural Complex (19th century), and Mug Teppe, an ancient fortress site perched above the town. You will also see the largest bust of Lenin in Central Asia, a striking reminder of the Soviet period.

After the visit, continue on to Khujand. Upon arrival, check in to your hotel. Overnight in Khujand.

Meals: breakfast

Day 13: Khujand – Border Crossing – Tashkent (Tajikistan/Uzbekistan)

After breakfast, check out from the hotel and begin a guided city tour of Khujand, one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. Known as Alexandria Eschate during the time of Alexander the Great and later as Leninabad in the Soviet period, Khujand has a rich and layered history.

Your sightseeing tour includes the Khujand Fortress, originally dating back to the 5th century BC and rebuilt during the Middle Ages, as well as the Historical Museum of Sughd, which offers insight into the region's past. You will also visit the Mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin, an important religious complex, the Panjshanbe Bazaar, one of the largest and liveliest markets in Tajikistan, and Somoni Park, a pleasant green space in the city centre.

After completing the tour, depart for Tashkent (approximately 170 km). Following border and customs formalities, continue to your hotel in Uzbekistan's modern capital. Enjoy free time in the evening. Overnight in Tashkent.

Meals: breakfast

Day 14: Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

After breakfast, enjoy a guided city tour of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Begin with a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts, which displays exquisite examples of national handicrafts inside a beautifully decorated historic villa. Continue with a ride on the Tashkent Metro, renowned for its artistically designed stations, each featuring distinctive murals and decorative tilework.

The tour then continues with a walk through Amir Timur Square and Independence Square, two important landmarks of modern Uzbekistan. Explore the Old City, including the Hast-Imam Complex (15th century), home to the oldest known Quran in the world and a major cultural heritage site. Conclude the city tour at Chorsu Bazaar, one of the oldest markets in Central Asia, where you can shop for fresh produce, traditional sweets, and local souvenirs.

Afterwards, drive to the Sacred Heart Cathedral, a 20th-century Roman Catholic church known for its stained-glass windows and Gothic-style architecture. Overnight in Tashkent.

Meals: breakfast

Day 15: Tashkent – Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

In the morning, your driver will transfer you to the railway station for a train journey to the stunning city of Samarkand (310 km). Upon arrival at Samarkand railway station, meet your driver and transfer to the hotel. Check-in is available from noon.

Begin your Samarkand city tour with a visit to Gur-Emir, the imposing mausoleum of Tamerlane and the 15th-century astronomer Ulugh Bek. Continue to the magnificent Registan Square, framed by three madrasahs dating from the 15th to the 17th centuries. Admire the grandeur of the Bibi-Khanum Mosque, then stroll through the multi-level complex of Siab Bazaar, where you can browse for souvenirs and sample local sweets, fresh fruits, and Samarkand's famous bread.

The tour continues to Shakhi-Zinda, an impressive burial complex dating mainly from the 15th century. Walk along its ceremonial pathway to admire the richly decorated blue-domed mausoleums.

After the tour, transfer back to the hotel. Overnight in Samarkand.

Meals: breakfast

Day 16: Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

Continue exploring the remarkable sights of the Silk Road city of Samarkand. Begin with a visit to the excavation site and museum of the ancient city of Afrasiab, which reveal the earliest layers of Samarkand's history. Continue to the Mausoleum of Khodja Daniyar, traditionally believed to be the burial place of the Prophet Daniel and an important pilgrimage site.

Next, drive to Konigil village to observe the traditional process of making Samarkand paper from mulberry bark, preserved using centuries-old techniques. The tour also includes an excursion to the Oriental Silk Carpet Factory, where you can see how high-quality handmade carpets are produced using traditional methods.

Conclude the day with a visit to the Ulugbek Observatory, where you can view the remains of the famous 15th-century sextant and explore the Ulugbek Museum dedicated to medieval astronomy. Overnight in Samarkand.

Meals: breakfast

Day 17: Samarkand – Gijduvan – Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

The Four Stans Central Asia Tour continues with a drive from Samarkand to Bukhara via Gijduvan (280 km), following a classic Silk Road route. Along the way, stop to visit the ruins of the Rabat-i-Malik Caravanserai and the nearby sardoba, an ancient water reservoir once used by caravans crossing the desert.

Continue to Gijduvan, a small town long known for its traditional crafts and distinctive ceramics, prized across Central Asia for their quality and richly decorative style. Visit a local ceramic museum and workshop before continuing the journey to Bukhara.

Arrive in Bukhara and transfer to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free to relax and enjoy the atmosphere of this historic Silk Road city. Overnight in Bukhara.

Meals: breakfast

Day 18: Bukhara (Uzbekistan)

After breakfast at the hotel, begin a guided walking tour of Bukhara's Old City, renowned for its rich history and outstanding architectural heritage. Your private tour starts at the Lyabi-Hauz Ensemble, a charming square framed by historic buildings and centred around a tranquil pond.

Continue to the Magoki-Attori Mosque and the Trade Domes (15th–16th centuries), which today are filled with lively souvenir stalls. The route then leads to the Poi Kalyan Ensemble, featuring the impressive Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque, and Miri-Arab Madrasah. Visit the Ulugbek Madrasah and Abdulazizkhan Madrasah, both fine examples of classical Islamic architecture.

Spend time wandering through the narrow alleyways of the Old City, browsing artisan workshops and traditional craft shops. The tour also includes a visit to the Ark Fortress and its museum, once the royal citadel of Bukhara, followed by the Bolo-Hauz Mosque overlooking a serene pond. Conclude the day at the Mausoleum of Ismail Samani, one of the most iconic monuments in Central Asia.

End the day enjoying the timeless atmosphere of Bukhara, a city that feels like an open-air museum. Overnight in Bukhara.

Meals: breakfast

Day 19: Bukhara – departure

Enjoy a free morning before checking out of the hotel by noon. Your driver will transfer you to the airport for your departure flight. End of the Four Stans Central Asia Tour.

Meals: breakfast

Inclusions:

- Accommodation in double or twin rooms (hotels: 15 nights; yurt stays: 2 nights; guesthouse: 1 night);
- Economy-class flight ticket from Almaty to Dushanbe;
- Economy-class train ticket from Tashkent to Samarkand;
- Eagle hunting demonstration in Bokonbayevo;

- Felt-making demonstration in Kochkor;
- Demonstration of yurt frame production and assembly;
- Entrance fees and ecological fees throughout the tour;
- Airport and railway station transfers, including pick-ups and drop-offs;
- Transfers between cities and border crossings;
- Meals: 18 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 4 dinners;
- City tours in Bishkek, Karakol, Almaty, Dushanbe, Khujand, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara with local guides;
- English-speaking escort guide services in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.

Exclusions:

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

For detailed information and booking, please follow the link:

<https://www.orexca.com/central-asia/tours/four-stans-central-asia-tour.htm>