

Silk Road in Turkmenistan Tour

Duration: 4 days

You will visit: Ashgabat, Mary, Merv.

Tour Itinerary:

Day 1: Ashgabat – arrival

Arrive in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. A driver will meet you at the airport to bring you to your hotel, where check-in begins at noon. Free time to relax at the hotel and enjoy its amenities.

Overnight in Ashgabat hotel.

Day 2: Ashgabat

Tour Ashgabat with your private local guide and driver. Meet at the hotel for a half-day of sightseeing in the capital:

- Old Nisa, a spectacular archaeological site just 15 km from the city. Nisa was the capital of the Parthian Empire, founded in the 3rd century BC and remaining in power for nearly 500 years. Today it's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia. Also referred to as the Spiritual Mosque and the Gypjak Mosque, it includes a mausoleum with the tombs of former president Turkmenbashi and his immediate family members.
- Arch of Neutrality, a 95-meter-high tower topped with a gold statue of former president Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) 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.
- Statue of Lenin, unique in that it stands on a large base ornately decorated in traditional Turkmen ornamentation.
- National Museum of History, displaying over half a million items from every region of the country, including rare and priceless artifacts from ancient times through the Middle Ages.
- Gulistan Bazaar (also known as the Russian Bazaar), one of the oldest markets in the city, a clean yet lively place to buy snacks and mingle with local shoppers.

Today's excursion also includes a trip to the Akhalteke horse stables, (app. 1 hour from Ashgabat), where you'll learn about the care and training of these pure-bred Turkmen horses, known for their incredible speed, agility and sleek beauty.

Overnight in Ashgabat hotel.

Tour duration: 5-6 hours

Day 3: Ashgabat – Mary – Merv – Mary

Take an early morning flight from Ashgabat to Mary (370 km, 40 min).

Upon arrival your guide and driver will meet you for your drive to Merv (40 km, 40 min), an ancient trade center on the Great Silk Road and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your guided sightseeing tour of Merv will include:

- Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum (12th century) – considered by many to be the most majestic architectural monument of Merv, this mausoleum amazes with its thick walls, symmetrical proportions and domed top that displays amazing architectural craftsmanship for its day.
- Greater Kyz Kala and Lesser Kyz Kala (8th-9th centuries) - These unique fortified homes are built of mud brick, with no known archeological equivalents.
- Askhab Mausoleums (9th-12th centuries) - Built for two of the prophet Muhammad's earliest disciples, the Askhab Mausoleums are one of Turkmenistan's most important pilgrimage sites today.
- Erk Kala (6th century BC), the seat of ancient Merv and its oldest settlement, whose remaining walls are nearly 30 meters high. Climb the walls for a great view of the surrounding area.
- Gyaur Kala (3rd century BC) - Merv's second oldest settlement, famous for its thick, 2-km long walls.
- Beni Makhan Mosque and cistern (7th- 9th centuries) - Also called the Juma Mosque, it's located in the center of ancient Gyaur Kala, along with an intact cistern that still functions today.
- Muhammad Ibn Zeid Mausoleum (12th century) - A popular Sufi shrine and one of the city's finest structures due to its simple architecture and Arabic inscriptions chiseled into its walls.

After completing the sightseeing tour of Old Merv, return to Mary to visit the Mary History Museum. Housed in a marble hall, the museum has six main exhibition rooms holding artifacts from ancient and modern times.

Transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Mary hotel.

Tour duration: approximately 5 hours

Day 4: Mary – Uzbekistan Border Crossing (Farap/Alat)

In the morning depart for the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border crossing (270 km, 4 hrs). Go through border formalities at both checkpoints. End of the Silk Road in Turkmenistan Tour.

Inclusions:

- Accommodation based on double/twin room in a hotel, with breakfast (3 nights);
- Transportation – all transfers, airport pick-up and drop-off at border (1-2 people in sedan, 3-8 in minivan);
- Private, local English-speaking escort guide;
- Entrance fees to the sights as per itinerary;
- Economy class flight tickets from Ashgabat to Mary (flight times subject to change based upon availability);

- Visa support letter for Turkmenistan tourist visa;
- 1L bottle of water per person per day.

Exclusions:

- Consular fees for Turkmenistan tourist visa and migration tax;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- Tips are not included (driver, guide, porter);
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Full board (lunches and dinners);
- Travel insurance;
- All other charges and services not mentioned under “Inclusions”.