



# JOURNEYS: THROUGH THE HEART OF THE STANS

13 days, Bishkek to Tashkent

Trip code AYBNG

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Your Journeys Highlight Moment: Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs with Local Historian and Professor, Cholpon-Ata
- Your Journeys Highlight Moment: Reina Kench Horse Farm, Karakol
- Your Journeys Highlight Moment: Tajik Almosi Village Visit and Bread Making, Dushanbe
- Your G for Good Moment: Yurt Building Demonstration, Barskoon
- Your Welcome Moment: Welcome Moment - Meet Your Expedition Leader and Group
- Arrival Transfer
- Bishkek City Tour
- National History Museum Guided Tour
- Free time in Bishkek
- Kyrgyz Family Meal
- Burana Tower Visit
- Iskra Village Dungan Family Lunch
- Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs
- Kyrgyz Horse Farm
- Karakol City Tour
- Przhevalsky Museum
- Yurt Building Workshop
- Jety Oguz and the Broken Heart
- Cossak Family Dinner
- Charyn Canyon Visit
- Almaty City Tour
- Free time in Almaty
- Dushanbe Orientation Walk
- Guided City Tour of Dushanbe
- Hisor Fortress
- National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan
- Tajik Almosi Village Visit and Bread Making
- Tajik Almosi Village Visit and Bread Making
- Internal flights
- All transport between destinations and to/from included activities

The information in this trip details document has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and G Adventures. The itinerary featured is correct at time of printing. It may differ slightly to the one in the brochure. Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements that stem from past travellers, comments and our own research. Sometimes it can be a small

change like adding an extra meal along the itinerary. Sometimes the change may result in us altering the tour for the coming year. Ultimately, our goal is to provide you with the most rewarding experience. Please note that our brochure is usually released in November each year. If you have booked from the previous brochure you may find there have been some changes to the itinerary.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Please ensure that you print a final copy of your Trip Details to review a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans.

**VALIDITY:** Valid for all trips departing August 7th, 2025 and onwards

## ITINERARY

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**NOTE:** Accommodations vary per departure and are subject to change until tour start date; they are not final and should be used as examples only. Travellers may login to the G Adventures App to view accommodations specific to their departure.

Day 1

## BISHKEK

Arrive at any time. Arrival transfer is included.

This evening, gather for a group welcome meet-up before a delicious dinner at a traditional restaurant.

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### Meals included

Dinner

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### ACCOMMODATION

Park Hotel Bishkek (or similar) Hotel

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### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

#### ACTIVITY

Your opportunity to meet your National Geographic Expedition Leader and fellow travellers, and learn more about your tour. Opt to join the group for a local meal afterwards. Don't forget to see the notice in the lobby (or ask reception) for the official time and place to meet up with the group.

Day 2

## BISHKEK

After breakfast, explore Kyrgyzstan's lively capital on a guided walking tour through Bishkek's wide boulevards, leafy parks and Soviet-era architecture. Then dive deeper into the region's past with a visit to the National History Museum, where exhibits trace the country's nomadic roots and complex political evolution. This afternoon, enjoy free time to explore Bishkek on your own. Opt to venture into the nearby Ala Archa National Park for a scenic hike to the striking Broken Heart Stone, surrounded by alpine meadows and rugged mountain views. This evening, experience Kyrgyz hospitality firsthand over a traditional dinner hosted by a local family, -an opportunity to connect, share stories and learn more about daily life.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Dinner



### ACCOMMODATION

Park Hotel Bishkek (or similar) Hotel



## TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Bishkek City Tour **Bishkek** 3h30m-4h

Get to know the capital of Kyrgyzstan better on a guided tour. See the highlights of the city like Ala-Too Square, the Paramount Kyrgyz Republic Flag, the Manas Statue of the hero of Kyrgyzstan and the Eternal Flame in Victory Square.

National History Museum Guided Tour **Bishkek**

Explore the Kyrgyz National History Museum alongside a local guide. As one of the most important museums in Central Asia, experience the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people with artifacts and sculptures that date back to 1st century.

Free Time **Bishkek**

Opt to hike to the Broken Heart Stone in Ala Archa National Park.

Kyrgyz Family Meal **Bishkek**

Indulge in a 3 course meal alongside the friendly Kyrgyz hosts at a family dinner to connect with and learn about Kyrgyz culture, lifestyles, and cuisine.



## Optional Activities - Day 2

Ala Archa National Park **Ala Archa Gorge** 3h-5h 2-3km

Make the 40km (25 mi) journey from Bishkek to the gorgeous Ala Archa National Park in the Tian Shan Mountains. Spend some time hiking the trails to the Broken Heart Stone and discovering more of Kyrgyzstan's raw grandeur.

Day 3

## BISHKEK/ ISSYK KUL

Feel transported back in time with a visit to the Burana Tower, a remnant of the ancient Silk Road city of Balasagan, where you'll explore the on-site museum to learn about the region's early civilization. Continue to Iskra Village for a special lunch with a local Dungan Family-descendants of Chinese Muslims who settled in Kyrgyzstan in the 19th century. Hear their stories and see their traditions through dress while sharing a home-cooked meal. This afternoon, journey along the northern shore of Issyk Kul Lake to the Cholpan Ata Petroglyphs, where a local historian- professor will guide you through the site's ancient rock carvings and explain the rich symbolism behind them. As observed by National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek in his "Out of Eden Walk" project, we'll be looking at Turkic-era petroglyphs dating back over 3,500 years ago. See images of mostly animals such as ibex and deer, but also depictions of archers and chariots.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch



### ACCOMMODATION

Altyn Bulak Lakeside Resort (or similar) Resort



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Private Vehicle

Bishkek - Burana

1h30m

65km

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle.

Iskra Village Dungan Family Lunch

Iskra

Enjoy an intimate and delicious local lunch in the family home of a local Dungan family, of Chinese-Hui Muslim minority group. Learn about the history of their migration, their tradition, and then try a traditional Dungan Chinese meal.

Burana Tower Visit

Burana

Visit the historical site of Burana and climb the stairs to check out the view from the top. A large minaret, along with some grave markers and remnants of a castle and mausoleums, are all that remain of the 9th century city of Balasagan.

ACTIVITY

Join a lecture by a local professor from the National University of Kyrgyzstan for an incredible introduction to the Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs. These rock carvings, found on stones scattered across a 42-hectare site, represent Kyrgyzstan's rich history. The site is thought to have been a sacred area for ancient peoples, including the Saka-Usun tribes, who performed rituals and sacrifices to the sun god.

Day 4

## ISSYK KUL/ KARAKOL

Today starts at Reina Kench Farm, a family run place dedicated to preserving Kyrgyzstan's nomadic traditions and the ancient practice of Central Asian horse breeding. Learn how the family's deep connection to the land and animals has influenced their way of life for generations. Afterwards, journey to Karakol where you'll join a guided tour to discover the city's unique blend of architecture and heritage, from the colourful Dungan Mosque, the ornate Russian Orthodox Church to the Przhevalsky Museum.

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### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch

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### ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Oimo Karakol (or similar) Hotel



## TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Private Vehicle

Cholpon-Ata - Karakol

3h30m

160km

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle.

### ACTIVITY

Visit the family-run Reina Kench Horse Farm to learn about the importance of horses in nomadic Kyrgyz culture. Learn about life on the farm, the history of this special horse breed and their role on the farm today.

Przhevalsky Museum Visit

Karakol

Visit a fascinating museum dedicate to the Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky. The museum offers insight into his life, travels and displays some of the flora and fauna endemic to the area.

Karakol City Tour

Karakol

Jump on a mini-bus and see what Karakol has to offer. Stop by the Russian Orthodox Cathedral to admire the unique architecture. This beautiful wooden church was built in 1895, after the old structure was destroyed by an earthquake, and is still used for services on Sundays. Next, visit the colourful Dungan Mosque originally built in 1910 that almost resembles a Buddhist temple. This is the only mosque in the area and definitely worth checking out.

Day 5

## KARAKOL

This morning, visit the G Adventures-supported organization, Ak Orgoo, to learn the traditional practice of yurt building from locals working to preserve and share their nomadic heritage. Enjoy a homemade lunch before continuing to the striking red rock formations of Jety-Oguz for a scenic hike to the Broken Heart, a site steeped in legend and framed by dramatic alpine landscapes. This evening, gather around the table with a Cossack family who will welcome you for dinner and a conversation about their ancestry, customs and resilience, giving you a deeper understanding of one of Central Asia's lesser-known cultural groups.

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### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

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### ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Oimo Karakol (or similar) Hotel

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### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

#### ACTIVITY

Visit the Ak-Orgo workshop, a G Adventures-supported project working to preserve Kyrgyz traditions and create employment opportunities in Barskoon. Observe how traditional yurts are built.

Jety Oguz and the Broken Heart Jety-Oguz

Visit the stunning Seven Bulls in the Jety Oguz mountain area. Watch as the bright red sandstone seemingly changes color hues as the sun reflects off the unique rock formations. Visit the Broken Heart and learn the legend of the Stone.

Cossak Family Dinner Karakol

Have dinner with a local Cossack family and learn about their cuisine and ancestry to understand one of Central Asia's lesser-known cultural groups.

Day 6

## KARAKOL/ SATY

After breakfast, cross the border into Kazakhstan's wide open steppe and rugged mountain landscape. Pause for a scenic picnic lunch at Black Canyon. After arriving at Saty Village, climb into a 4x4 for an excursion to the surreal waters of Kaindy Lake. Here, a forest of submerged spruce trees rises eerily from the surface-an unforgettable and perfect place for a hike. This evening, connect with Kazakhstan's rural life with dinner at a local family's home. Share stories and a warm meal in this peaceful mountain community.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



### ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Kolsay Prestige (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Kyrgyzstan - Kazakhstan Border Crossing Karkyra - Karkara

Ready for a little more ink in your passport? Grab your bags and get ready to check another country off your bucket list.

Private Vehicle Karakol - Karkyra 2h-2h15m 80km

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle.

Day 7

## SATY/ ALMATY

Head out for a visit to Charyn Canyon, known as the "Grand Canyon of Central Asia.. Walk through its towering red rock formations, sculpted over millions of years by wind and water. This natural wonder shows off Kazakhstan's powerful geological forces. As mentioned in the National Geographic article by Jessica Vincent "Hiking Kazakhstan: a day in Charyn Canyon National Park," you'll feel as though you're standing on the moon while equally feeling as though you are walking beneath giant skyscrapers of red rock. The afternoon will bring you to Almaty, which was the capital of Kazakhstan until 1997. Head out on an orientation walk then enjoy the rest of the day.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch



### ACCOMMODATION

Renion Park Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Private Vehicle

Saty Village - Charyn Canyon National Park

2h30m

140km

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle.

Private Vehicle

Charyn Canyon National Park - Almaty

3h-4h

230km

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle.

Charyn Canyon Visit

Charyn Canyon National Park

Enjoy the views of the beautiful Charyn Canyon. Breathe the fresh air and snap a few photos of this stunning landscape.

Day 8

## ALMATY

Set out on a city tour of Almaty strolling through Republic Square, once the heart of Soviet power, then wander the tree-lined paths of Panfilov Park to visit the beautiful, all-wooden Ascension Cathedral. Then immerse yourself in the rhythm of daily life at the bustling Zeleny Bazaar, where vibrant stalls overflow with fragrant spices, bright produce and local delicacies. Afterwards, the afternoon is yours to explore on your own. Tonight, enjoy dinner and a show at a local restaurant.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Dinner



### ACCOMMODATION

Renion Park Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Free Time Almaty

Enjoy the rest of the day to explore Almaty.

Almaty City Tour Almaty 3h

Get to know Almaty on a city tour, visiting the most stunning sights. Stop by the colourful Ascension Cathedral, constructed entirely of wood without the use of any nails. It survived an earthquake in 1911 and continues to stand today. Walk through Panfilov's Park and the historical part of the city. Visit the new part of Almaty known as Independence Square, and stop by the WWII Memorial.



### Optional Activities - Day 8

Zelyony Bazaar Almaty

Also known as the "Green Bazaar," this was once a key trading centre in the city. Explore this traditional outdoor Kazakh market and roam around the varied stalls. Find anything from local spices and meats to souvenirs or furniture. Stay for a meal or opt to sip on tea while watching the hustle and bustle of the market unfold.

Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan Almaty

Once within the Almaty Cathedral and now in a beautiful Kazakh building lives one of the largest museums in Central Asia, the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Here you will find an incredible and significant collection of historic Kazakh archaeological, cultural and political artifacts.

Day 9

## ALMATY/ DUSHANBE

A flight today brings you to Dushanbe, Tajikistan's green capital where grand boulevards, colorful markets and Soviet-Era monuments reflect a complex and fascinating history. The city of Dushanbe was shaped by centuries of Silk Road exchange and rich Persian influence. See the area around your hotel to get your footing in the city, then enjoy a traditional folklore show over dinner.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Dinner



### ACCOMMODATION

The Rumi Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Plane Almaty - Dushanbe 1h30m

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's... yup, it is a plane, actually.

Dushanbe Orientation Walk Dushanbe

Take an orientation walk of Dushanbe to get the lay of the land.

Day 10

## DUSHANBE

Dive into the history and culture of Tajikistan on a guided tour of Dushanbe. Begin at Somoni Square, a proud symbol of national identity, then marvel at the intricate design and craftsmanship of Navruz Palace. Visit the city's largest mosque which reveals the country's spiritual traditions. Savour a hearty lunch of plov, the national dish often prepared for guests and celebrations. This afternoon, venture beyond the city to Hisor Fortress with its ancient gates and centuries-old stone walls, which were a resting place for Silk Road travellers.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch



### ACCOMMODATION

The Rumi Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Guided City Tour of Dushanbe Dushanbe

Visit the highlights of the capital city of Tajikistan on a guided tour, seeing the Somoniy Square, Navruz Palace and the main Mosque of Dushanbe.

Hisor Fortress Hisor

On the outskirts of Dushanbe lives one of the best preserved historical sites in the country: The Hisor Fortress. Built around 2500 years ago and strategically built on a hilltop, learn about its incredible history with a visit to Hisor Fortress.

Day 11

## DUSHANBE

Begin the day at the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan, home to a remarkable collection of artifacts that trace the region's ancient civilization. Join a local archaeologist for a special guided visit, delving into the history of Buddhism in Central Asia and its influence along the Silk Road. Later, feel welcomed in a local Tajik home for a hands-on bread-making experience of "non," the famous Tajik round, golden flatbread.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch



### ACCOMMODATION

The Rumi Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan

Dushanbe

Connect with Tajikistan's unique history at the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan. Join a local archeologist and learn about Buddhism in Central Asia.

#### ACTIVITY

Take a tour of the beautiful Tajik Almosi village to learn about the local customs and traditions. Head to the home of a local family for lunch. Together alongside our family hosts, we'll learn to make homemade bread from scratch.

Day 12

## DUSHANBE / TASHKENT

Fly to Uzbekistan with time to uncover Tashkent's Soviet legacy on a guided tour in the afternoon. Explore Tashkent's underground metro, said to be the most beautiful in the world as it doubles as an art gallery. Visit Kosmonaut Square, a tribute to the Soviet space program, and see other architectural wonders like the Uzbekistan Hotel and Zhemchug Resident Complex. Finish at the Monument of Courage, a tribute to the rebuilding of the city after a devastating earthquake. This evening, gather for a farewell dinner.



### Meals included

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



### ACCOMMODATION

Mir Luxe Plaza Hotel (or similar) Hotel



### TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Plane

Dushanbe International Airport – Tashkent International Airport

1h8m

350km

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's... yup, it is a plane, actually.

Guided City Tour of Tashkent

Tashkent

Visit the city's highlights with a local guide. Ride the Russian-esque metro, visit the religious centre of the city and the famous Soviet Monuments. Wander the neighbourhood streets, learn about daily life, the Uzbek people and history of the city.

Depart at any time.

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## Meals included

Breakfast

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## TODAY'S ACTIVITIES

Departure Day

Not ready to leave? Your Expedition Leader can help with travel arrangements to extend your adventure.

## What's included

- Your Journeys Highlight Moment: Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs with Local Historian and Professor, Cholpon-Ata
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- Your Journeys Highlight Moment: Tajik Almosi Village Visit and Bread Making, Dushanbe
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- Tajik Almosi Village Visit and Bread Making
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- Internal flights
- All transport between destinations and to/from included activities

## What are the main highlights of this trip?

Share a home-cooked meal and heartfelt stories with a welcoming Kyrgyz family in Bishkek, Marvel at the surreal beauty of Kaindy Lake where a forest was submerged by an earthquake and now rises eerily from the water, Discover how the Silk Road still shapes daily life with guided tours through the cultural hubs of Almaty and Dushanbe

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## Is there a travel disclaimer for my itinerary I should review before booking this trip?

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described below, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The Trip Details document is a general guide to the tour and region and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Aboard expedition trips visits to research stations depend on final permission.

Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.

# What important notes should I be aware of before the trip?

## CULTURE

Central Asia is a region which may be very different to anything you have experienced before. Mixture of Soviet heritage and Islam, summer heat and winter cold, religious conservatism, traffic and crowds can result in initial culture shock but should be seen as an exciting new challenge.

## DRESS CODE

Though you can see lots of people in traditional clothes, Central Asia has adopted western style clothing as well. Don't hesitate to pack your usual travel clothes: in summer it can be shorts and t-shirts, sandals etc. We recommend not to bring tank tops/singlets and any types of clothes with bare shoulders and backs - it is unacceptable in most areas, even in bigger cities. Our tour takes us to many religious sights, where dress code is very strict. We recommend women to have a headscarf in their day bags to cover up when going inside mosques (it's also a great help in the heat in summer). Best things to pack for the hot Central Asian climate is loose, long clothing - long trousers and sarongs or long skirts for women. In colder months (from the end of October through the end of April) it can rain and snow - bring warm clothes, jackets and comfortable warm shoes for walking.

## ALTITUDE CONSIDERATIONS

This trip operates at altitudes over 800m. Whilst we travel slowly allowing plenty of time to acclimatize you may experience headaches, nausea, and lethargy. It is important to be aware of the affects of altitude on one's tolerance especially on long driving days.

## MONEY

Due to the restrictions on changing money in Central Asia region, only notes/bills printed after 1996 and in good condition will be accepted for exchange. Usually 50 and 100 USD/EUR notes get better exchange rate. We recommend to bring smaller denominations as well - many vendors accept them if you don't have local currency.

## RAMADAN

According to the lunar cycle, Ramadan will fall between Feb 28th - Mar 29th 2025, and Feb 17th - Mar 19th 2026. Please note that Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world, during which time the followers of Islam should not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. There may be some limitations to services and disruptions to schedules during Ramadan, but generally our tours still operate effectively during this period and food is available to non-Muslims throughout the day. It is very important to display increased cultural sensitivity during Ramadan. Please wear loose fitting clothes, that cover knees and shoulders, and try to avoid eating, drinking or smoking in public out of respect for those who can't at that time.

## COMBO TRIP

Please note that this tour combines with other G Adventures tours. As such, the staff and some travel companions on your tour may have previously been traveling together with G Adventures, prior to Day 1 of your tour. Likewise, some staff and travel companions may be continuing together on another G Adventures tour, after your trip concludes.

## ACCOMMODATION NOTE:

Please be aware that properties we stay in with only two stories may not have elevators installed and climbing the stairs with your luggage will be necessary.

Please note, Turkmenistan have strict advisories on prohibited medications which can be taken into the country. If you require further details, please reach out to our Sales team who will be able to advise further.

## **What is the role of the group leader during this trip?**

All G Adventures group trips are accompanied by one of our National Geographic Expedition Leader. The aim of the Expedition Leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting- we think it's the best of both worlds.

## **How large will the group be?**

16

## **What meals are included in this trip?**

12 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 7 dinners

## **What are the modes of transportation on my trip?**

Private Vehicle, Plane, Metro, Walking.

## **Are local flights included in the cost of the trip?**

Please be aware that flight delays between Bishkek and Dushanbe can occur. Your Expedition Leader may need to make adjustments to your itinerary in case of flight schedule changes.

Please be advised that any flights noted on the G Adventures Itinerary for this tour are included in the tour services provided. Flight tickets are provided by G Adventures during the tour. The date for this service will match the day of the itinerary, for which Day 1 is equal to the start date noted on the Invoice under Land Services: Tour. If flight information is required in advance for visa purposes, please contact G Adventures.

## **Is there an extra cost for travelling solo?**

We believe single travellers should not have to pay more to travel so our group trips are designed for shared accommodation and do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers joining group trips are paired in twin or multi-share accommodation with someone of the same sex for the duration of the trip. Some of our Independent trips are designed differently and single travellers on these itineraries must pay the single trip price.

## **Where will we stay during the trip?**

Hotels (12 nts)

## Will I get my own room?

Please note that if you have booked the "My Own Room" option for this tour, you will receive your own single room for all night stops

## What are the joining instructions?

For details of your joining hotel please refer to your tour voucher, G Account, the G Adventures App or contact your travel agent.

An arrival transfer is included when you arrive on Day 1, or if you arrive up to three days prior provided that you have booked your pre-accommodation through National Geographic Journeys in our joining hotel. Due to customer experience and quality considerations, all services related to the tour must be continuous.

Please note that day 1 is an arrival day and no activities have been planned on this day.

Upon arrival to your Joining Hotel (note that check-in time will be in the afternoon), look for a note or bulletin board in the reception with a note from your Expedition Leader. This note will give the details of your Welcome Meeting on day 1 (usually between 5pm and 7pm), where you will get a chance to meet your Expedition Leader and other travellers, as well as learn more about how the tour will run. If you don't see a note, please ask reception for details!

If you are arriving later and will miss the Welcome Meeting, your Expedition Leader will leave a note at reception for you with any information you may need, and with morning instructions for the next day.

## What happens if I experience problems when arriving?

We don't expect any problems, and nor should you, but if for any reason you are unable to commence your trip as scheduled, as soon as possible please contact your starting point hotel, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for your Expedition Leader (if you are not on a group tour please refer to the emergency contact details provided in this dossier). If you are unable to get in touch with your leader, please refer to our emergency contact details. If you have pre-booked an airport transfer and have not made contact with our representative within 30 minutes of clearing customs and immigration, we recommend that you make your own way to the Starting Point hotel, following the Joining Instructions. Please apply to your travel agent on your return for a refund of the transfer cost if this occurs.

## Who should I contact in case of an emergency?

Should you need to contact us during a situation of dire need, it is best to first call either the G Adventures Local Representative (if one is listed below) or our G Adventures Local Office. If for any reason you do not receive an immediate answer, please leave a detailed message and contact information, so they may return your call and assist you as soon as possible.

### AIRPORT TRANSFER

If you have purchased an arrival through G Adventures or if an arrival transfer is included in the cost of your tour, please note that:

Your arrival transfer has been arranged based on flight information provided to us. If you are advised of a flight schedule change or flight cancellation within 48 hours of your scheduled arrival time, please call the emergency contact number to advise of your new arrival flight information. If you do not, we will not be able to rearrange your arrival transfer and you will need to make your own way to the starting hotel at your own expense. If your arrival transfer does not arrive within 30 minutes after you have exited the arrivals area please take a taxi to your start point hotel.

If your call is specifically concerning Airport Transfer complications please call our local G Adventures Transfer provider directly: Mr. Arlan +996700602090, Mrs. Asel +996777202888

### EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

G Adventures Office Central Asia:

Mr. Laziz Otayarov (Operations Manager - Central Asia)

Mobile 1: +99890 963 4779 (24h)

If you are unable for any reason to contact our local office, please call the numbers listed below which will connect you directly with our Sales team who will happily assist you. Hours of operation by region can be found [here](#).

Toll-free, North America only: 1 888 800 4100

Calls from UK: 0344 272 0000

Calls from Germany: 0800 365 1000

Calls from Australia: 1 300 796 618

Calls from New Zealand: 0800 333 307

Outside North America, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the UK: +1 416 260 0999

## What information should I be aware of as the itinerary draws to a close?

If you would like to book an airport Departure transfer for your tour, please contact our Sales Team or your Travel Agent in advance of travel.

## **Are there any additional packing suggestions I should consider?**

What you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. Generally speaking though, you should pack as lightly as possible. On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage (please see below for exceptions), and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage (max 30 minutes) we recommend keeping the weight under 10kg/22lb.

Suitcases are not recommended for G Adventures travellers! Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable, although we recommend your bag has carry straps as well, as you may be required to negotiate bus and railway station steps. You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day walks and day trips.

# What should be on my packing list?

## Cold Weather:

- Long-sleeved shirts or sweater
- Scarf
- Warm gloves
- Warm hat
- Warm layers
- Warm waterproof jacket

## Conservative Dress:

- Modest clothing that covers knees and shoulders (Long pants, long skirts, shirts that cover shoulders)
- Shawl or scarf (for temple visits)

## Documents:

- Flight info (required) (Printouts of e-tickets may be required at the border)
- Insurance info (required) (With photocopies)
- Passport (required) (With photocopies)
- Vouchers and pre-departure information (required)
- Visas or vaccination certificates (With photocopies)

## Essentials:

- Toiletries (required) (Shampoo, bodywash, soap, etc.)
- Binoculars (optional)
- Camera (With extra memory cards and batteries)
- Cash, credit and debit cards
- Day pack (Used for daily excursions or short overnights)
- Ear plugs
- First-aid kit (should contain lip balm with sunscreen, sunscreen, whistle, Aspirin, Ibuprofen, bandaids/plasters, tape, anti-histamines, antibacterial gel/wipes, antiseptic cream, Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhea, rehydration powder, water purification tablets or drops, insect repellent, sewing kit, extra prescription drugs you may be taking)
- Flashlight/torch (Headlamps are ideal)
- Fleece top/sweater
- Footwear
- Hat
- Headphones (Noise-cancelling recommended)
- Locks for bags
- Long pants/jeans
- Moneybelt
- Outlet adapter
- Personal entertainment (Reading and writing materials, cards, music player, etc.)
- Reusable water bottle
- Shirts/t-shirts
- Sleepwear
- Small travel towel
- Sunglasses
- Swimwear
- Watch and alarm clock
- Waterproof backpack cover
- Windproof rain jacket

## Health & Safety:

- Face masks (Clients will be only be required to wear a face mask where it is mandated by local regulations.)
- Hand sanitizer
- Pen (Please bring your own pen for filling out documents.)

## Warm Weather:

- Sandals/flip-flops
- Shorts/skirts (Longer shorts/skirts are recommended)
- Sturdy water shoes/sandals
- Sun hat/bandana
- Swimwear

## When can I do my laundry on this trip?

Laundry facilities are offered by some of our hotels for a charge. There will be times when you may want to or have to do your own laundry so we suggest you bring non-polluting/biodegradable soap.

## What are the visas and entry requirements for my trip?

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information up to date as much as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself with the Embassy. Please, keep in mind that all countries require passports valid for at least 6 months from the moment of departure from the country.

Visa information specific to your destination and nationality can be found in our Important Pre-Departure Information page [here](#)

### KAZAKHSTAN

If you require a Letter of Invitation (LOI) to apply for a Kazakhstan visa, please fill out & submit the following request [form](#)

### KYRGYZSTAN

If you require a Letter of Invitation (LOI) to apply for a Kyrgyzstan visa, please fill out & submit the following request [form](#)

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you require an LOI (Letter of Invitation) for your Visa application for Kyrgyzstan, you will be subject to a processing fee of \$50USD (or currency equivalent) per person. This is charged by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### UZBEKISTAN

If you require a Letter of Invitation (LOI) to apply for a Uzbekistan visa, please fill out & submit the following request [form](#)

### TAJIKISTAN

British nationals and other nationalities who are not eligible for visa exemption, must apply for an e-Visa.

Your application can be made via the official [e-Visa Tajikistan page](#). Please note, a GBAO Permit is not required for this tour.

Following your e-Visa application, you may be required to also provide a Letter Of Invitation (LOI). To ensure you have all of the documents required at time of applications, the following is recommended:

- 30-60 days before your departure, apply for your LOI [here](#)
- as per the Tajikistan e-Visa site, apply for your e-Visa 2 weeks before your trip

If you require a Letter of Invitation (LOI) to apply for a Tajikistan visa, please fill out & submit the following request [form](#)

Address in Tajikistan

Dushanbe – “The Rumi Hotel” – Mirzo Tursunzoda Street 10

If required:

The local operator in Tajikistan – “Panjakent Intour”

Address: 12, Borbadi Marvazi street, Panjakent

Tel: +992 3475 56674

Information accurate as of April 1st, 2024.

## **What should I consider when planning my personal expenses and discretionary spending for this itinerary?**

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

## **What should I know about currency, credit cards, and exchanging money while on this tour?**

In general Central Asia is a cash operating region, and travellers cheques are not recommended. Due to bank restrictions, only banknotes printed after 1996 can be exchanged. Better to bring notes without marks or stamps on them. We recommend to bring about 70 USD in small denominations: 1, 5 and 10 USD notes. If you are not able to get local currency it's always possible to pay in USD or EUR.

### **Uzbekistan**

There are lots of ATM's to withdraw local currency (UZS), and banks around to exchange USD or EUR. Travellers cheques are not recommended, as only limited amount of banks work with them. Please, note that you can withdraw only local currency (Uzbek Sums) from ATM's. Some banks in Tashkent allow USD cash advance, but this option depends on the amount of USD cash in the bank.

### **Kazakhstan**

The preferred currency for local transactions is the tenge, and local establishments rarely accept credit cards so keep cash on hand. ATMs in Kazakhstan are accessible in the larger cities, and withdrawals can be made by credit card. There are many currency exchange locations available to exchange EUR, USD, GBP, Russian rouble, Kyrgyz som and Chinese yuan.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

The preferred currency for local transactions is the som, and local establishments rarely accept credit cards so keep cash on hand. There are many of ATMs accessible in Bishkek and other larger cities such as Cholpon Ata and Karakol. Larger cities will also have money exchange locations that will trade EUR, USD, Roubles; some locations will trade GBP, and Chinese yuan.

### **Tajikistan**

The preferred currency for local transactions is the somoni, and local establishments rarely accept credit cards so keep cash on hand. You may be able to pay in USD and EUR in some places, however, it is recommended that you take out somoni at ATMs in Dushanbe; there are very few ATMs outside of Dushanbe, and those that exist are less dependable.

## **How much emergency money should I bring on this trip?**

Please also make sure you have access to at least an additional USD \$200 (or equivalent) as an 'emergency' fund, to be used when circumstances outside our control (ex. a natural disaster) require a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence!

## Should I be tipping on my trip?

In Central Asia It is not customary to tip service providers such as waiters, but it is very appreciated, depending on the service we recommend 3-5%. Tipping shows an expression of satisfaction with the people who have assisted you on your tour. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. There are several times during the trip where there is opportunity to tip the local guides or drivers we use. You may do this individually, or your Expedition Leader will offer to collect the money and tip as a group. Recommendations for tipping drivers and local guides would range from \$3-\$4 USD per person per day depending on the quality and length of the service; ask your Expedition Leader for specific recommendations based on the circumstances and culture.

Also at the end of each trip if you felt your National Geographic Expedition Leader did an outstanding job, tipping is appreciated. The amount is entirely a personal preference, however as a guideline \$4-7 USD per person, per day can be used.

## What activities are optional on this trip?

### Ala Archa Gorge

- Ala Archa National Park

### Almaty

- Zelyony Bazaar
- Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan

## Are there any health considerations I should know before travelling?

Please note inoculations may be required for the country visited. It is your responsibility to consult with your travel doctor for up to date medical travel information well before departure.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information well before departure. We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit and hand sanitizers / antibacterial wipes as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that sometimes we are in remote areas and away from medical facilities, and for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc. In Asia pharmacies tend to stock the same western drugs as you get at home but they are usually produced locally so please bring the full drug name with you when trying to purchase a prescription drug. When selecting your trip please carefully read the brochure and itinerary and assess your ability to cope with our style of travel. Please refer to the Physical and Culture Shock ratings for trip specific information. G Adventures reserves the right to exclude any traveller from all or part of a trip without refund if in the reasonable opinion of our Expedition Leader they are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group.

Please note, Turkmenistan have strict advisories on prohibited medications which can be taken into the country. If you require further details, please reach out to our Sales team who will be able to advise further.

## What do I need to know to about safety and security on my trip?

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, travellers' cheques, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage. When travelling on a group trip, please note that your Expedition Leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns. Your Expedition Leader will accompany you on all included activities. During your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your Expedition Leader will assist you with options available in a given location please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your itinerary, and we offer no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time. Although the cities visited on tour are generally safe during the day, there can be risks to wandering throughout any major city at night. It is our recommendation to stay in small groups and to take taxis to and from restaurants, or during night time excursions.

Protests and Demonstrations- Protests and demonstrations, even those that are well intended, have the potential to turn violent with no warning. Counter protests can also turn violent. Action by security forces to disperse demonstrators and protesters may occur at any time. If you are in an area where demonstrators or protesters are gathering, avoid the temptation of staying for a good photo opportunity and leave the area immediately.

Water based activities have an element of danger and excitement built into them. We recommend only participating in water based activities when accompanied by a guide(s). We make every reasonable effort to ensure the fun and adventurous element of any water based activities (in countries with varying degrees of operating standards) have a balanced approach to safety. It is our policy not to allow our Expedition Leaders to make arrangements on your behalf for water based activities that are not accompanied by guide(s).

Swimming, including snorkeling, is always at your own risk.

We take all prudent measures in relation to your safety. For ways to further enhance your personal safety while traveling, please visit:

[www.gadventures.com/travel-resources/safety/](http://www.gadventures.com/travel-resources/safety/)

## What are the trip specific safety considerations?

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, travellers' cheques, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

## What rules should I know before joining this trip?

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on any trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for our travellers. Our philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make the world the special place it is. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our National Geographic Expedition Leaders have the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

## Is travel insurance required for my trip?

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance is compulsory in order to participate on any of our trips. When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance has been sighted by your Expedition Leader, who will take note of your insurance details. When selecting a travel insurance policy please bear in mind that all clients must have medical coverage and that we require a minimum coverage of USD 200,000 for repatriation and emergency rescue. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects. If you have credit card insurance we require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

## What is Planeterra?

Planeterra International Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to turning travel into impact by helping local communities earn an income from tourism. Planeterra connects underserved local communities to the benefits of tourism by developing and supporting small community-owned businesses. These businesses support Indigenous people, empower women, grant youth access to employment opportunities, and protect the environment. Planeterra also works to ensure these businesses have a thriving customer base by integrating their projects into G Adventures' itineraries globally.

G Adventures is Planeterra's largest corporate donor, covering all operating costs, so 100% of your donation will bring opportunity to people in need.

G Adventures Dollar-a-day Program - Make Every Day Count - Turn your travel into impact with [Planeterra Foundation](#).

Did you know? Most communities around the world do not benefit from tourism. Give back to the places you visit on your travels by creating opportunities for local people to earn an income, and protect the environment.

Make every day count by donating \$1/day for the length of your trip, and join us in empowering the communities you will visit when you travel. 100% of your donation goes directly to Planeterra projects.

## How should I dress to respect local customs during the tour?

Central Asian dress is quite conservative. Plan to pack loose-fitting light clothing appropriate for hot weather and plan to cover knees, shoulders and chest. For women, a hair scarf is recommended, though they are easy to buy in country.

## How can I share feedback about my trip experience?

Earn 5% off your next G Adventures Tour (up to \$100 USD)\*

After your travels, we want to hear from you! Your feedback information is so important to us and to thank you for your time, we are pleased to offer a 5% discount (up to a maximum of \$100 USD) off your next G Adventures holiday. All you need to do is submit the form within 4 weeks of the completion of your tour, and you'll be able to join the thousands of travellers who have taken 2, 3, 4 or even 10 or more tours with us!

Discount cannot be combined with other offers or applied to 'Independent' style trips. Maximum discount value is \$100 USD (or equivalent currency). Valid for new bookings only. G Adventures reserves the right to withdraw or modify this offer at any time without notice. Limited to one discount per person.

## How old must I be to join this trip?

You must be 18 to travel unaccompanied on a G Adventures tour. For minors travelling with a guardian over 21 years old, the minimum age is 12.

## Are international flights included in this trip?

No, international flights are generally not included in the price of your tour.

However, on some combo tours travelling between two different countries, international flights are included as part of the itinerary and price of the tour. Please speak to your National Geographic Signature Specialist or booking agent for further details.

In addition, check-in times and baggage allowances/restrictions vary by airline and can change at any time. For the most up-to-date information for your flight, please contact your airline. We recommend checking in online in advance to avoid potential delays at the airport.

## What should LGBTQ+ travellers know about safety and travel considerations on this trip?

The safety and well-being of all of our travelers is a priority at G Adventures and that includes our travelers who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. We recognize that there are specific concerns and questions you may have about your adventure in terms of safety and security. We encourage you to visit our [LGBTQ+ page](#) for useful resources to ensure you feel safe and comfortable throughout the duration of your trip. The Equaldex tool linked on this page can be of particular help when deciding where you may want to visit next.

## Dossier Disclaimer

The information in this trip details document has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and the operator. The itinerary featured is correct at time of printing. It may differ slightly to the one in the brochure. Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements that stem from past travellers, comments and our own research. Sometimes it can be a small change like adding an extra meal along the itinerary. Sometimes the change may result in us altering the tour for the coming year. Ultimately, our goal is to provide you with the most rewarding experience. Please note that our brochure is usually released in November each year. If you have booked from the previous brochure you may find there have been some changes to the itinerary.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Please ensure that you print a final copy of your Trip Details to review a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans.

## Itinerary Disclaimer

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described below, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The Trip Details document is a general guide to the tour and region and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Aboard expedition trips visits to research stations depend on final permission.

Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.