

# Central Asia Explorer

THE GOLDEN ROAD TO SAMARKAND



TRIP DATE

2025

April 16-May 5, 2025

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## THE GOLDEN ROAD TO SAMARKAND

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Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—sometimes known as the four 'Stans—reveal a rich historical and ethnic canvas, filled with dazzling scenery and a multitude of architectural wonders. From the blue-domed Silk Road oasis of Samarkand, where Tamerlane once held sway, to Issyk-Kul, a vast alpine lake surrounded by the forested peaks of the Tien Shan, our journey with veteran Central Asia Trip Leader Roger Williams brings us through the heart of the Silk Road. We enjoy a full exploration of these four countries, roaming ancient bazaars that take us back to the times of the Arabian Nights, meeting local families and traditional artisans, and exploring eight World Heritage Sites, including magnificent Bukhara, a 2,000-year-old city wrapped in medieval mosques, and Khiva, a walled town isolated in a vast desert. Join us for the ultimate Silk Road adventure!



1102 Ninth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

800-368-2794 • 510-558-2488

[www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com) • [info@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:info@wildernesstravel.com)

# Itinerary

## DAY 1

### ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN

Arrive in Almaty, the metropolitan hub of Kazakhstan, where you are met for transfer to our hotel. In the evening, we'll gather for a Welcome Dinner and trip briefing at our hotel. Overnight at the Hotel Royal Tulip or similar...D

## DAY 2

### ALMATY

Our explorations in Almaty, founded in the mid-19th century as a Russian frontier fort, include Panfilov Park, the city's central park, named after the Panfilov Heroes who died fighting the Nazis outside of Moscow. Other visits include the multi-colored Zenkov Holy Ascension Cathedral, one of the world's largest wooden buildings, constructed without the use of a single nail, and the Museum of Kazakh Musical Instruments, State Museum of History (including a visit to the Golden Room), and the Zilyoni (Green) Bazaar. If time permits after lunch, we can visit the Kasteyev Museum of Art, housing some rare 18th-19th century paintings by Russian masters that survived the purges of the Stalin era, the Grand Mosque of Almaty, and take a cable car up to Kok Tyube for views over Almaty. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Royal Tulip or similar...BLD

## DAY 3

### ALMATY / TAMGALY TAS / BISHKEK

This morning, we'll drive out to Tamgaly Tas, a World Heritage Site filled with 5,000 rock petroglyphs ranging from solar deities and animals from the Middle Bronze Age (14th-13th century BC) to warriors, archers, men on horseback, and other signs of power struggles in the Middle Ages (6th-12th century AD). After a picnic lunch, we continue to the border with Kyrgyzstan, pass through border formalities, and proceed to Bishkek. Dinner and overnight at Hyatt Regency Hotel or similar...BLD

Driving Details: Approximately 266 miles, 8 hours

## DAY 4

### BISHKEK / ISSYK-KUL LAKE / KARAKOL

With the rising sun, we depart for a long but scenic drive along the southern edge of Issyk-Kul, the second largest saline lake in the world. Though it's surrounded by snow-capped peaks, the lake never freezes; its name means "warm lake" in the Kyrgyz language. We stop in the small village of Bokonbaevo for a demonstration by local eagle hunters. We also visit a village where we can watch traditional felt making. After lunch with a Kyrgyz family in a nearby village, we'll continue on to the peaceful town of Karakol, with its shady poplar trees, apple orchards, and back streets lined with Russian gingerbread cottages. This town was named Preshevalsky in Soviet times, after the famed 19th century scientist-explorer Nicolai Preshevalsky, one of the pioneering members of Russian Geographical Society. He is credited with introducing the wild Mongolian horse (takhi), renamed Preshevalsky's horse,

## TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

<b>Length:</b>	20 days
<b>Arrive:</b>	Almaty, Kazakhstan
<b>Depart:</b>	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<b>Lodging:</b>	19 nights in hotels
<b>Meals:</b>	All meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
<b>Activity:</b>	Archaeology, Cultural Adventures
<b>Trip Level:</b>	1 2 ③ 4 5 6 Cultural exploration and walking tours, rugged road travel

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Issyk-Kul Lake in the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan
- Ancient Samarkand, capital of Tamerlane, with its magnificent blue mosques
- Eight World Heritage Sites including the Silk Road cities of Bukhara and Khiva

# Itinerary (cont'd)

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to the world. The late afternoon is at leisure, followed by dinner at our guesthouse. Overnight at the Green Yard Guest House or similar...BLD

Driving Details: Approximately 230 miles, 7 hours

## DAY 5

### KARAKOL

An early start allows us to witness the best action at Karakol's famous animal market—the Mal Bazaar. Shepherds from surrounding regions travel long hours to bring their livestock to trade here—on foot, by cart, by tractor, by car, and even by motorcycle. This is old-style commerce at its best, with everyone evaluating the living merchandise, prices on handsome horses, sheep, and cattle fluctuating wildly by the hour, buyers struggling to load finicky sheep onto their flatbed trucks, and sellers trying to convince you to purchase their horses (they'll understand if you politely decline).

Karakol's Orthodox Church, with its six golden onion domes, was founded in 1869 when Karakol was a garrison town on the edges of the Tsarist Russian Empire. Like the rest of the buildings in town, it was constructed of wood without any metal nails, making its size even more impressive. Though it fell into disuse during the Soviet period, the church is now active again, and its green and gold roof is a recognizable landmark in Karakol.

The sky-blue wooden minaret of the Dungan Mosque in the center of Karakol is one of the most recognizable features of the city. The mosque resembles a pagoda more than an Islamic house of worship because the Dungan (Muslim Chinese who fled China in the 1880s) retained much of their old country's aesthetic style when they arrived in Kyrgyzstan. The wood is intricately carved with floral motifs, and the presence of Cyrillic alongside Arabic words in the mosque is a testament to the multicultural heritage of the inhabitants of Kyrgyzstan.

Here we learn about the Dungan people, known for their kindness, industry, and hospitality. Mostly farmers, they immigrated to the region 140 years ago during a period of local unrest and still practice many traditional elements of their culture and cuisine. The Dungan Mosque, designed and constructed by Chinese artisans and completed in 1910 and still in use today, is a colorful wooden structure originally built without any nails.

We also visit the One Village One Project Association, opened in 2011 to provide an opportunity for Kyrgyz women to produce high-quality crafts and food products. We continue to Karakol's small regional museum, located in a former Russian landowner's brick home. It features exhibits on local petroglyphs and archaeological finds, regional costumes, Kyrgyz applied art, and photography. After lunch, we drive to Jety Oguz Canyon, known for its red sandstone cliffs. On the way, we pass Broken Heart Hill, where local legend says two suitors killed each other in a struggle for a beautiful woman, who then died of a broken heart herself. Farther on, the massive red-rock wall of the Seven Bulls soars upwards. Dinner is at a local Dungan family house. Overnight at the Green Yard Guest House or similar...BLD

## DAY 6

### KARAKOL / CHOLPAN-ATA / BISHKEK

This morning, we visit the Przhevalsky Museum, where we view photos and instruments used by the famed 19th century Russian explorer during his explorations of Central Asia and Tibet. Later we depart for Cholpan-Ata, a town on the northern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, then travel along the shores of beautiful Lake Issyk to the village of Burana for lunch at a local home. Afterwards, we visit Burana, famous for its brick minaret known as the Burana Tower, built in the 11th century. It is one of the only remaining watchtowers on the old Silk Road through Kyrgyzstan. A climb up to the top on steep steps is rewarded by a magnificent view. The area was once a settlement called Balasagun, the birthplace of the poet Jusup Balasagun, whose surviving work consists of an epic poem called "Kutadgy Bilig" or "the knowledge which brings happiness." It was also an important seat of power, so celebrated that Genghis Khan's Mongol horde spared the city from destruction when it began to conquer the region in the early 13th century. The Mongols renamed the city Gobalik, meaning "good city." We'll visit the small museum and its collection of ancient bal-bals, carved stone figures used as monuments. Lunch will be at a family home and dinner is at the hotel. Overnight Hyatt Regency Bishkek or similar... BLD

Driving Details: Approximately 263 miles, 7 hours

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## DAY 7

### BISHKEK

Our explorations today include sprawling Alatau Square, where we see the changing of the guards, the massive statue of Manas, who is an important figure in Kyrgyz folklore, and the history museum, with its ceiling murals depicting scenes from World War II and the Holocaust. In Dubovy Park, home to an open-air sculpture museum, we'll watch artists at work. Later, we visit the village of Supara for some traditional Kyrgyz cuisine with local folk music, a wonderful introduction to the thriving local culture. Overnight at hotel...BLD

### DAY 8 BISHKEK / OSH / ANDIJAN, UZBEKISTAN / MARGILAN

We make an early morning departure to the airport and fly to Osh, driving a short distance through Osh to the border to cross into Uzbekistan. After border formalities, our Uzbek guide will meet us for a drive to Andijan, where we visit the local museum and Jame Mosque complex, then continue through the Fergana Valley to the ancient Silk Road city of Margilan, which according to local legend, was founded by Alexander the Great. After lunch at the Ikat House, we visit the silk workshop of Master Rasuljon to see how traditional Uzbek silk ikat is made. Dinner is at a local restaurant. Overnight at Ikat Hotel or similar...BLD  
Driving Details: Approximately 96 miles, 3-4 hours

### DAY 9 MARGILAN / KOKAND / KHUJAND, TAJIKISTAN

After breakfast, we depart for Kokand, one of the oldest Silk Road towns in Uzbekistan, stopping along the way to visit the pottery workshop of Master Rustam Usmanov. In Kokand, we visit the Palace of Khudayar Khan, the last khan of the Kokand khanate, who was defeated by Tsarist Russia in 1875. After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue to the Tajikistan border, pass through border formalities, and are met by our Tajik guide for a drive to Khujand, a major staging point on the northern Silk Road. Near present-day Khujand is the site where Alexander built Alexandria Eschate, his furthest Greek settlement. According to the Roman writer Curtius, Alexandria Ultima ("Alexandria the Furthest") retained its Hellenistic culture as late as 30 BCE. If time permits, we will visit the local museum. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Grand Khujand or similar...BLD  
Driving Details: Approximately 148 miles, 4 hours

### DAY 10 KHUJAND / DUSHANBE

This morning we visit the Punjshanbe Bazaar and the mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin, then drive to Istaravshan, where we explore the Mugh Tepe fortress, which dates to the Archaemenian Empire in the 5th century BCE, as well the Chor Gumbaz ("four domes") and Kok Gumbaz ("blue domes") mosques. After lunch, we continue to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Serena Dushanbe or similar...BLD  
Driving Details: Approximately 190 miles, 5-6 hours

### DAY 11 DUSHANBE / GISSAR

Named for the Persian word for Monday, Dushanbe was once a small market village where traders gathered each Monday to sell their goods. The city's shady *chai khanas* (teahouses) are decorated in traditional, colorful Tajik style, and the local Barakat market, a covered bazaar, reflects the city's long history as a center of trade. During the Soviet era, the city grew to be the most important industrial center in Tajikistan. Our explorations include the National Museum of Antiquities, with its fascinating collection of Greco-Bactrian and Buddhist art (as well as the largest reclining Buddha statue in the region), the Monument of Ismoil Somoni, a beloved ruler of the Samanid Dynasty (819-999 CE), and the Gurminj Museum, a private museum of musical instruments. After lunch, we drive out of town for a visit to Gissar, a Silk Road center of commerce and learning still dominated by its 18th century Ibrahim Beg fortress. Several madrassahs (religious schools) from that period are still standing today. Dinner is at a local restaurant. Overnight Dushanbe Serena Hotel or similar... BLD

### DAY 12 ANZOB PASS / ISKANDERKUL / PANJAKENT / SAMARKAND

From Dushanbe, we head over the Anzob Pass (11,063'), with its magnificent panoramic views, to Iskanderkul, a beautiful lake surrounded by mountains. It is named for Alexander the Great, who is believed to have passed by here en route to India. The lake is part of a nature reserve and an important birding area. After a brief stop, we continue to Panjakent to visit the Sunday Market, followed by lunch at a local restaurant. If time permits, we'll visit the Rudaki Museum. On the way to the Uzbekistan border, we visit

# Itinerary (cont'd)

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the World Heritage Site of Sarazm, thought to be the oldest city in Central Asia. Sarazm means “where the land begins” and the site dates from the 4th millennium BCE. The city most likely traded with Gonar Depe in present-day Turkmenistan and the Indus Valley cities of southern Pakistan more than 2,000 years ago. After completing border formalities, we enter Uzbekistan and continue to Samarkand. Overnight at Kosh Havuz Boutique Hotel or similar...BLD

Driving Details: Approximately 185 miles, 5-6 hours

## DAY 13 SAMARKAND

We have a full day to enjoy Samarkand, starting with a morning visit to the breathtaking main square, the Registan, with its panorama of handsome blue-tiled mosques and 15th century madrassas. The Registan was once Samarkand's main bazaar, full of caravansaries for passing merchant caravans. Tamerlane's scholarly grandson turned the Registan into the stirring masterpiece we see today. We visit the Bibi Khanym tomb, built to commemorate the wife of Tamerlane, and the Shahr-i-Zindah, a stunning complex of mosques and tombs. They display some of Central Asia's finest mosaics of deep sapphire and turquoise tiles set off against tawny earthen walls. We also visit the Afrosiab Museum, with its frescoes dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries, Ulugbek's Observatory, and Gur Emir, the mausoleum of Tamerlane. Later we stop in at Kunihil village to see the traditional way paper is made from the pulp of mulberries and we have lunch here with a local family. Overnight at Kosh Havuz Boutique Hotel or similar...BLD

Samarkand: A sophisticated walled city when Alexander the Great took it over in 329 BC, Samarkand has had an array of rulers, from Turks to Arabs to Persians and Mongolians. They each made Samarkand their own, and Genghis Khan and his dreaded horsemen took the city in 1220. The illustrious warrior Tamerlane seized Samarkand in 1370 and while his rule was exceptionally bloody, he turned Samarkand into one of the cultural centers of Central Asia. It was during Tamerlane's time, from 1370 to 1405, that Samarkand became a city of almost mythic fame, with its soaring minarets and gleaming blue-tiled domes. During Tamerlane's conquests of other cultures, he always sent the very best artists and architects to Samarkand and ordered them to build grand and lavish monuments. The city went into decline in the 16th and 17th centuries, and

the Emir of Bukhara took it into his khanate in the late 18th century. In 1865, Russian Cossacks took the city from the Emir during the height of the Great Game. The arrival of the Trans-Caspian railway 20 years later firmly linked Samarkand to Russia.

## DAY 14 SHAKHRISYABZ / BUKHARA

This morning we explore the historic center of the city of Shakhrisyabz, the birthplace of Tamerlane (1336-1405), the founder of the Timurid Empire. An undefeated commander, he is widely regarded as one of the greatest military leaders and tacticians in history, as well as one of the most brutal and deadly. We'll see monuments from the Timurid period, including the Ak Saray Palace ruins, the Dorus Tilavat seminary, the Kok Gumbaz mosque, Amir Timur's Crypt, and the Friday Mosque. After lunch at a local restaurant, we depart for Bukhara, with dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Mercure by Accor or similar...BLD

Driving Details: Approximately 226 miles, 6-7 hours

## DAY 15 BUKHARA

Bukhara is a fascinating city whose beautifully restored medieval quarter is now a World Heritage Site. We'll visit the impressive Lyab-i Khauz architectural complex, once the principal source of water for all of Bukhara, and the Magak-i Attari Mosque, where Jews and Muslims once worshipped beside one another. Other visits may include Nadir Divan-begi Madrassa, with its gorgeous tile work, the Poi Kalon minaret, with its incredible brickwork, and the madrassas of Abdulaziz Khan and Ulugbek. We have a special opportunity to visit with one of Bukhara's most well-known miniaturist artists, Davlat Toshev, in his home studio, where we will have lunch. Other visits include the Ark Fortress, once used as the army headquarters by the Bukharan emirs, the Zindan Prison, with its underground dungeon and Bug Pit, and the brick monuments in the mausoleum of Ismail Samanid and Chasma Ayub. Dinner is at local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Mercure by Accor or similar...BLD

## DAY 16 BUKHARA / KHIVA

Today we drive across the Kyzyl Kum desert to Khiva, enjoying a picnic lunch en route. Upon arrival in Khiva this evening, we enjoy dinner accompanied by a performance of traditional Khorezmian music with the folklore group Khalfi. Brilliant costumes, historic songs, and traditional

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instruments are featured in this program of local music and dance. Overnight at Zarafshan Boutique or similar...BLD  
Driving Details: Approximately 280 miles, 7-8 hours

### DAY 17 KHIVA

We enjoy a full-day walking tour of atmospheric Khiva, including the fortress of Itchan Kala, protected by thick brick walls, the Kalta Minor minaret, decorated in turquoise tiles, and Kunya Ark, with its copper cannons. We'll also explore Madrassa Rahimkhan, the Pahlavan Makhmud, the Islam minaret and museum, and the Friday Mosque and Tashala Palace. Overnight at Zarafshan Boutique or similar... BLD

Khiva: Like Bukhara, Khiva was once a minor stop on the Silk Road during the 8th century. It began to prosper under the rule of the Uzbek Shaybanid tribesmen, who captured it in the 16th century. As a Shaybanid khanate, it became one of the two major slave markets of Central Asia for hundreds of years (Bukhara was the other). Turkomen raiders captured people as far away as the Caspian and delivered them to Khiva's slavers. In the early 18th century, the Khan of Khiva made an alliance with Russia for protection against marauding tribes, and the Russians sent troops to Khiva in 1717 with the idea of protecting it. The crafty Khan had by then lost interest in the arrangement with the Russians and had them killed. He sent the head of their leader, Prince Alexander Bekovich, back to Russia with the few survivors. Khiva was taken over shortly thereafter by a Persian invader and began to prosper from trade between Russia and neighboring khanates. Two British officers, Captain James Abbott and Lieutenant Richmond Shakespear, entered Khiva separately in 1839 and 1840, ostensibly to negotiate with Khan over the release of certain slaves. As this was the height of the Great Game, they may have really been there to study strategic routes between Khiva and Russia. In 1872, Khiva became too much of a thorn in Russia's side, and as Russian troops under General Kaufman advanced on it, the Khan surrendered.

### DAY 18 URGENCH / TASHKENT

After breakfast, we depart for the Urgench Airport for our flight to Tashkent, with lunch at local restaurant. In the afternoon, we visit the State History Museum, with its unique Buddha statues, the Museum of Applied Arts, where we explore its Uzbek needlework and pottery,

and the Navoi Theatre. Dinner is at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Mercure by Accor or similar...BLD  
Driving Details: Approximately 30 miles, 1.5 hours  
(Khiva to Urgench Airport)

Tashkent: Once a walled city and a bustling Silk Route caravan crossroads, this city's name in Turkic means "city of stone." It fell to Genghis Khan's mounted hordes in the 13th century and did not become prosperous again until the 15th century under Tamerlane, who bequeathed the city to his 10-year-old grandson Ulugbek in 1405. In 1865, the Russians snatched Tashkent away from the Emir of Bukhara, and it became the main Tsarist (and later Soviet) center for espionage during the Great Game of territorial rivalry between Russia and Britain. Within 10 years after Tashkent was taken, the Russian General Konstantin Kaufman, the architect of Russia's conquest of Central Asia, took Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Khotan, and became governor of a brand-new Russian province. The arrival of the Trans-Caspian Railway in 1889 and Russia's relocation of Russian workers and factories to Tashkent turned it into an industrial center by the 1920s. Much of the city was destroyed by an earthquake in 1966, but there are still some parts of the old town left where you can see 15th and 16th century buildings.

### DAY 19 TASHKENT

Our city tour takes us past the Earthquake Memorial to the old section of the city, where we can visit the Hast Imam complex, the Barak Khana seminary, and the Tile Shaikh archives, home to the oldest copy of the Usman Koran, dating back to 7th century AD. We also visit the Chorsu Sunday Market, the Kukeldesh Madrassa, and Mustaqillik Square, which translates to Independence Square (it was previously known as Lenin Square but in 1991, the Lenin statue was removed and the Monument of Independence of Uzbekistan in the form of a globe was erected). Lunch is at a local restaurant, with the afternoon at leisure to prepare for our departure tomorrow or for last-minute shopping. This evening we gather for our festive Farewell Dinner. Overnight at Hotel Mercure by Accor or similar...BLD

### DAY 20 DEPART

Transfer to the airport for departure on homeward-bound flights...B

# Trip Cost, Payment & Insurance

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## TRIP COST

\$11,195 (12-15 members)

\$11,695 (9-11 members)

\$12,195 (6-8 members)

Single supplement: \$1,695

Internal airfare: \$175 (subject to change)

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. All costs are per person, based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

## CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice will reflect the difference in trip cost.

## TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert leadership of Wilderness Travel Trip Leader Roger Williams and local guides
- Accommodations as noted
- All meals included as indicated in the Detailed Itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Land transportation and sightseeing as noted
- Entrance fees to all sites listed in itinerary

## TRIP COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

International airfare, internal airfare (see separate cost above), airport departure taxes, individual arrival or departure transfers, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, optional tipping or gratuities to the leader, optional helicopter flight, hotels en route to and home from the trip, any additional hotel nights that may be necessary due to international airline schedule changes or other factors, pre-trip expenses of medical immunizations, visa fees, mandatory medical evacuation insurance (required), and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation: \$600

90 days prior to departure: Balance

## CANCELLATION AND TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 151 days prior to departure: No charge!

91-150 days prior to departure: \$600 per person

90 days or less: 100% of trip cost

\*Please note that this differs from our regular catalog departures.

## MANDATORY EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSURANCE

Please note: Insurance for emergency medical evacuation is required for this trip. Wilderness Travel offers a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan through Travelex Insurance that meets this requirement. For more details, visit our website: [www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance](http://www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance). Alternatively, you can purchase a different policy on your own, as long as it includes emergency medical evacuation coverage of at least \$250,000 per person. You can compare various options at [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com).



# Arrival & Departure

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Upon confirming your trip reservation, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a list of documents (passport, visas, etc.) required for your trip. Please feel free to call if you would like this information before making your air arrangements.

If you have booked extra services before or after the trip, an Extra Services Confirmation will be sent with your Final Documents.

## ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Suggested Airport:** Almaty International Airport (ALA)

**Suggested Date & Time:** Day 1, by 3:00 pm

**Meeting Place:** A complimentary transfer is provided from Almaty International Airport to the group hotel for all trip members, no matter when you arrive. A Wilderness Travel representative will meet you outside the customs area and will be holding a Wilderness Travel sign and/or a sign with your name on it. They will then transfer you to the group hotel. There will be a Welcome Dinner and orientation in the evening of Day 1.

**Please Note:** Since many flights arrive in Almaty in the early morning hours, we have guaranteed early check-in for all trip members at the group hotel on Day 1. Your room will be ready no matter when you arrive on Day 1.

## DEPARTURE

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

**Suggested Airport:** Tashkent International Airport (TAS)

**Suggested Date & Time:** Day 20, anytime

A complimentary transfer will be provided from the Hotel Mercure Accor to Tashkent International Airport, no matter when you depart. Please note that check-out time on Day 20 is 12:00 pm.

## INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to and from the trip.

There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 970-818-8459 in the US or Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found on Exito's website at [www.exitotravel.com](http://www.exitotravel.com).

Depending on your routing, it will be necessary for you to depart from the US one or two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. We recommend you arrive at least one night early so that you have a full day to recover from jet lag. Extra hotel nights can be arranged for you (at extra cost). The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip. Once your tickets have been purchased, please forward a copy of your email flight confirmation from the airline. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

# Trip Leader

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Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders have a passion and a joy for creating an unforgettable journey. We are extremely proud of them and the incredible travel experiences they make possible.



## ROGER WILLIAMS

Roger Williams has been one of our most versatile guides since 1986, and he shows no sign of stopping. He spent eight years studying Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhist iconography, Himalayan languages, and woodblock art in Nepal, and another two years studying Japanese woodblock art, Japanese language, and Shingon Shu, an esoteric sect of Japanese Buddhism in Japan. If it isn't the surplus of knowledge Roger brings when he leads a trip that makes him so unique, then it may be his awareness for cultural preservation that keep trip members so loyal to his new adventures. Each year, Roger works with WT to design new trips in fascinating areas. He has led in such far-flung locations as Iran, Pakistan, northern Afghanistan, Kamchatka, Burma, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Madagascar. When he's not leading, you can find Roger in Berkeley, California, where he is the director of Snow Lion Graphics/SLG Books, a publishing house specializing in Asian cultures. "There should be a rating higher than excellent for Roger," one trip member wrote after her journey with Roger. "His knowledge, energy, planning, and attentiveness are superlative."

# Trip Details

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## WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

The trip is rated Level 3, moderate. While this trip is not expected to be physically strenuous, the rustic accommodations, long travel days, and transportation conditions may be quite demanding. Accommodations are in good city hotels and in comfortable rustic lodges. Overland travel is in minivans and small buses, depending upon the size of the group. Road conditions can be very basic, and trip members should be prepared for long drives. Our expedition travels to areas that have experienced very little tourism. We believe that the most important requirements are a spirit of adventure and the understanding that you are visiting a remote and fascinating region. This is not a hiking trip, but we do hope to have opportunities for walks of two hours or more during the journey.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in

this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for the Asia Manager or email us at [asia@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:asia@wildernesstravel.com).

## REFERENCES

We'd be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us on this or a similar trip.

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At [www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com), you can book your trip online or find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and one-time Limited Edition adventures that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access our complete library of detailed itineraries filled with enticing photos and videos, read bios of our Trip Leaders, find descriptions of trip accommodations, and check real-time availability of any trips that interest you.

# Toucan Club Rewards & Discounts

We are very proud to have one of the highest rates of repeat travelers in the business, and have established the Wilderness Travel Toucan Club to reward you for your loyalty. For more information, please visit the Toucan Club page of our website at [www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan](http://www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan).

Here's how it works:

## YOUR FIRST TRIP

As a first-time traveler, you receive a lightweight Wilderness Travel T-shirt and set of durable WT Luggage Tags. On subsequent trips, we're happy to send you a new WT T-shirt and set of Luggage Tags by request.

## YOUR SECOND TRIP

A top quality Wilderness Travel insulated stainless steel water bottle by CamelBak and a cozy Wilderness Travel fleece vest by Patagonia (\$130 value).

## YOUR THIRD TRIP

A versatile Wilderness Travel R-1 pullover by Patagonia (\$140 value).

## YOUR FOURTH TRIP

Discounts on the cost of your trip begin! You receive a 4% discount on the tour cost.

## FIVE AND MORE TRIPS

You receive a 5% discount on the base trip cost. On your sixth trip, you receive a 6% discount, and so on up to your 10th trip. The maximum discount is 10%, with a ceiling of \$500.

*Note: Due to special pricing considerations, Toucan Club discounts do not apply to our Private Journeys or Special Events. However, your participation on these trips does count toward your Toucan discount on future departures of Wilderness Travel's regular adventures.*

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

Toucan Club travel discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount, unless otherwise specified. Discounts are deducted from the base trip cost and shown on the final invoice. The base trip cost is the main land/tier cost and does not include single supplement fees, extensions, internal airfare, or other additional charges. Bonus gifts (T-shirts, luggage tags, vests, water bottles, and pullovers) will be mailed approximately three weeks prior to trip departure. Terms and conditions of Toucan Club bonuses are subject to change or cancellation at the discretion of Wilderness Travel, Inc.



T-SHIRT FRONT



T-SHIRT BACK



PATAGONIA SYNCHILLA FLEECE VEST  
PLUS INSULATED CAMELBAK WATER BOTTLE



PATAGONIA R1 PULLOVER



## WILDERNESS TRAVEL HAS BEEN AWARDED:

**Best Travel Specialists in the World:** *Conde Nast Traveler*, 2024, 4-time winner

**World's Best Tour Operators:** *Travel + Leisure*, 11-time winner

**Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips:** *AFAR Magazine*, 3 years in a row

**Best Adventure Travel Companies:** *USA Today*

**Trip of the Year:** *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner

**50 Tours of a Lifetime:** *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

**Best Adventure Travel Companies:** *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel Catalog.

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