



## Steppe Journeys

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**Day 1, Arrival in Dushanbe via Istanbul pick up and transfer to the hotel .**

**Dushanbe – Gizar – Dushanbe 30+30km (1 hours drive and back)**

Breakfast. Sightseeing the Dushanbe city: Dushanbe is the capital and largest city of Tajikistan. Dushanbe means "Monday" in Tajik (Persian language), and the name reflects the fact that the city grew on the site of a village that originally was a popular Monday marketplace. Situated at the confluence of two rivers, Varzob and Kofarnihon.

Navruz palace – amazing palace with national style

Museum of antiquaty – history. Sleeping Buddha.

Monument Somoni and park Rudaki

Lunch in local restaurant.



Hissar fortress 30km outside of city – the remains of an 18th century fortress, occupied until 1924 is located in 30 km west of Dushanbe. Beside the fortress are two plain madrassahs, one dating from the 18th century and the other 19th, and beyond them is the mausoleum of 16th century (25km). Drive to Dushanbe.

Dinner at national chayhana. Overnight in hotel

**Meals: B /L/D**

**Day 2 , Dushanbe – Iskandarkul lake (160km) 3.5 hours drive with photo stops**

Breakfast. Drive to Iskandarkul lake via Varzob gorge and tunnel Isticlol (5km)

You will see Fan Mountains – a popular tourism and mountain climbing area in Tajikistan. There are about 100 passes in height from 3200 to 5060 m (Mirali). The Fan Mountains are the highest part of Zeravshan range with 11 peaks above 5,000 m with sharp fantastical pointed forms. In the bosom of these mountains are about 30 lakes, the largest of which are Iskandarkul, and the most beautiful and picturesque, famous for the unique play of colors - Kulikalon.



Iskandarkul lake: length - 5km, width - 3,5km and depth to - 80m, located at height 2250m. The heart of Fan mountains, the treasure of Tyan-Shan, a scenic Iskandarkul lake is one of the most beautiful lakes in Tajikistan. Having emerald green and blue color. A fast flowing Iskandar-darya river flows from the lake, forming a marvelous and gorgeous waterfall, so called the "Fan Niagara" that

falls from the height 38 meters.

Walking near the lake. See waterfall  
Lunch. Walking near the lake.  
Dinner and overnight in the guest house.

**Meals:** B /L/D

### **Day 3 , Iskandarkul lake – Penjekent city 180km 4 hours drive with photo stops**

Breakfast. Drive to Penjikent. The city of Penjikent ("five villages") is located in Khujand area of Tajikistan in a picturesque Zeravshan river valley. Quite possibly the five villages started the history of this remarkable city which originated in the 5th-8th centuries AD. Penjikent of that time was one of the most important cultural and crafts centers of Sogd. It was even named "Central Asian Pompeii".

Sightseeing in the city.

Museum of Rudaki – As Penjikent is a birthplace of Abu Abdallah Rudaki, considered by many to be the father of Persian Poetry.

Ancient Penjikent - ruins of old Sogdian town founded in 5th century and abandoned in the 8th century by Arabs. Foundations of houses, a citadel with a couple of Zoroastrian fire temples and city bazaar are visible in the excavated ruins.

Sarazm settlement – 5500 years  
Dinner in the national chayhana Sayohat.  
Overnight in the hotel

**Meals:** B /L/D

### **Day 4 , Penjekent – Marguzor lake – Penjekent 70+70km 2 hours drive + 2 hours back**

Breakfast. Drive to Marguzor lake 70km.  
Marguzor lakes: Seven beautiful lakes. The first lake's name is Mizhgon (eyelash) - Multi-coloured, one of the most beautiful Marguzor lakes. The Soya (shade) second lake and third lake Husher (vigilance) at



height 1700m. The fourth lakes name's Nofin length 3,5km, depth 70m. The fifth lakes Hurdak. The sixth lakes Marguzor - length of lake 5km, depth of 80 metres, height on a sea level 2139m. Seventh Lake-Hazorchashma (one thousand sources) at height 2400m, length 4,5km and depth 85m.

Picnic near the lake

Drive back to Penjekent city.

Dinner and overnight in the hotel.

**Meals: B /L/D**

### **Day 5 , Penjekent – Istarafshan – Khujand 320km 5 hours drive with photo stops**

Breakfast. Drive to Istarafshan city: Istaravshan is a museum city, the ancient center of trade and crafts, one of the most ancient cities of the Central Asia. In 2002 Istaravshan turned 2,500 years old. The city was founded in the sixth century B.C. by a Akhemenid king Cyrus who fortified the settlement by means of three wall lines and a citadel. In the second -seventh centuries B.C. the ancient sentiment Mugteppa was located on the territory of Istaravshan. Mugteppa was the residence of the local aristocracy who erected there numerous palaces distinguished by original expressive architecture. The evidence of that was found in Bundzhikat (Kala and Kakh-Kakh) and Chil'khudzhra settlements which had fortified structures with palaces and cult buildings decorated with paintings and carved panels. For example in Bundzhikat the archaeologists found the painting with the image of a she-wolf feeding two babies - the symbol of contacts between the West and the Orient. During the years of Arabian sovereignty Istaravshan became a province Arabian Caliphate. It was at this time when Islamic architectural structures of portal-dome design such as mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, minarets, etc. started to appear.

Sightseeing the city: Madrasa Kuk-Gumbaz, Old city, mosque Shohi Zinda

Lunch. Drive to Khujand city.

Evening walking in the central park.

Dinner and overnight in the hotel.

**Meals: B /L/D**

### **Day 6, Khujand – border Batkent**

Breakfast. Khujand is the capital of northern Tajikistan and the second largest city in the country. The city's history dates back to ancient times. In the opinion of historians legendary city of Alexander-Eskhata (Alexandria Extreme) was constructed by Alexander the Great on the place of the present Khujand (the 5th century BC) and become the city of highly developed culture, important commercial and crafts center. It in many respects speaks it can be explained by its favorable position. Khujand stands at the entrance to the fertile Fergana Valley. Owing this it was one of the main centers of the Great Silk way and enjoyed prosperity and richness. One of the ancient cities of the Central



to

Asia Khujand has been known since the 7th century. In the 19th century after the Russian intrusion Khujand became the center of district of rapid industrial development. Sightseeing the city: museum, western market Panjshanbe and mavzoleum Shayh Muslihiddin Lunch. Drive to the border. Transfer to Kirgiz part.

**Khujand – Osh (Kyrgyzstan) 300 km 5hrs**

Meeting a group at Tajik-Kyrgyz border “Kizil-Bel”. After border formalities drive to Osh via Batken town.

We’ll enjoy a drive along the Eastern Fergana valley surrounded by mountain views.

Upon arrival in Osh, visit Osh bazaar. Dinner and overnight.

**Meals: B**

**Day 07, Osh – Uch-Terek village, Toktogul lake 280 km; 4,5 – 5 hours drive**

After breakfast city tour of Osh. Visit Rabat Abdullah Khan Mosque located in the bottom of the Suleiman Throne. Later enjoy walking in the central square Osh including Lenin Statue, Russian Old Orthodox Church. Lunch at local restaurant. After drive to drive to Uch-Terek village, Southern coast of Toktogul Lake, and stopping along the way at the Ozgen minarets. Our journey takes us through the hydro-power stations, Toktogul Water Reservoir. Dinner and overnight in Kok-Bel hotel.

**Meals: B/D**

**Day 08, Toktogul Lake – Bishkek 350 km; 6 hours drive with stops at mountain views**



In the morning, we drive to Bishkek via Ala-Bel Pass, Susamy Valley and Teo-Ashu.

Upon arrival in Bishkek, a city tour which includes Central Square Alatau, White House, Parliament House, Manas on Horse Statue, Lenin Statue, and Oak Park.

**TUMAR STUDIO:** Tumar is a modern Kyrgyz felt boutique shop, which produces all manner of felt from ethnographic horse trappings to simple, contemporary shoes. To create livelihoods in the wake of the Soviet disintegration in 1991. Visit: <http://www.tumar.com>

We will also visit some handicraft studios of Aidai, a leading and well-known young felt-maker and designer based in Kyrgyzstan. She is an owner of Kyal Handicraft and Yurt Maker's Non-Profitable Organizations. <http://www.christensenfund.org/2013/04/26/looking-at-the-world-through-felt-eye-glasses/>

Overnight at hotel in Bishkek

**Meals: B**

**Day 09,      Bishkek – Burana – Issykul 330 km                      5-6 hours drive**

**(but we will have stops en route for visits)**

After breakfast drive to Ala-Archa national park. En route Visit Stalin's victim's memorial Ata-Beyit Complex. Enjoy either an easy or strenuous hike at Alarcha at 9200 feet (2,800 meters) surrounded by beautiful mountains for about more than 1 hour. Later continue driving to Burana tower. The tower, along with grave markers, some earthworks and the remnants of a castle and three mausoleums, is all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagun which was established by the Karakhanids at the end of the 9th century.

The next stop is in nearby Don-Aryk village where you will witness the famous horseback game called ulak-tartysh (also known as kupkari and buzkashi ). After the game, around midday, lunch at the local house of Mukan Baike in Don-Aryk village.



Late afternoon drive to Lake Issyk Kul Lake 260 kms. Visit Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs, a civilization dating back to 5th Century BC near the lake and in both locations, you can see the Baalbals: stone faces carved on rocks.

Issyk Kul (literally "Warm Lake") never freezes despite its altitude of 1600 m. This is due in part to thermal activity deep down. The lake is the second highest and largest in the world at 702 m deep. It is unique in that many streams and rivers flow in, none flow out.

The Tian Shan looks like a sleeping camel, and among its humps, in the circle of mountain ranges, Issyk Kul is sparkling like a birth-mark on a girl's face – in the words of the Old Kyrgyz song.

Overnight in hotel.

**Meals: B/L**

**Day 10, Issykul – Grigoryevskoe Gorge - Karakol 180km 4 hours drive**

After breakfast, we will depart to Karakol, on the Eastern end of Lake Issyk Kul. En route we will visit to them beautiful gorge Grigoryevskoe. Hiking exploration. Later continue to Karakol. Upon arrival check in hotel.

**Meals: B**

**Day 11, Karakol – City tour - Jeti Oguz – Karakol**

After breakfast city tour of Karakol town, one of the first Russian military outpost founded on July 1, 1869. The town existed from early on as a trading center and garrison. It was called Przhevalsk in Soviet times, after the explorer Nikolai Przewalsky, whose last expedition ended here, and who is buried nearby.



The Dungan Mosque is the only one of nine mosques not destroyed by the Bolsheviks, although they did close it for ten years. Impressively, it was built without a single nail, using techniques brought from China, the Dungan homeland.

Afternoon drive to Jety Oguz gorge. This afternoon we enjoy visiting to the beautiful gorges of Southern Issykul Region.

Visit Jety Oguz gorge (40 minutes), a lush valley with striking red sandstone rock formations – the 'Seven Bulls' from which the valley takes its name. Hiking in the Jety-Oguz gorge. Afterwards, drive back to Karakol. Overnight in hotel.

**Meals: B**

**Day 12 ,      Karakol - Bishkek      420 km      7 – 7,5 hours drive with stops**

After breakfast, drive to Bishkek. En route we will stop at Bokonbaevo village, which is located on the South shore of Issyk Kul Lake. Here is the exciting show of Golden eagle hunting on a rabbit. Afterwards drive to Bishkek. Arrival in Bishkek.

**Meals: B**

**Day 13 ,      Departure at 1020.**

After breakfast, transfer to airport, end of services.

**Meals: B**

**Tour price:**

**02-US\$2340 per person in Twin/Double room share**

**04-US\$2280 per person in Twin/Double room share**

**06-US\$2190 per person in Twin/Double room share**

**08-US\$2099 per person in Twin/Double room share**

**Single room supplement – US\$380**

CITY	HOTELS 4* Best available option
Dushanbe	Atlas 4* or similar 4*
Iskanderkul	Guest House
Penjikent	Rudaki 3*
Hujand	Firuz 4*
Osh	Classic Osh 4*
Toktogul Lake	Kok-Bel 3*
Bishkek	Golden Dragon/Plaza Bishkek 4*
Issykul	Kapriz hotel 4*
Karakol	Green Yard/Karagat 4*
Chonkemin	Ashu Guest house

**Tour cost includes:**

1. Accommodations: Hotels/Guest houses with breakfasts
2. Transfers
3. English speaking guide
4. Entrance fees
5. Dinners at homestays only Shown in the program in Kyrgyzstan
6. Lunch and Dinner in Tajikistan part

**Tour cost excludes:**

1. International flight
2. Lunch and dinner in Uzbekistan
3. Photo and camera fee
4. Tipping guides and drivers