

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Wonders of the Silk Road (SUZ 2017)



TRIPDURATION

14
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic

Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups

Accommodation

Grade: Standard

Trip Code: SUZ

Trip Highlights - Wonders of the Silk Road

- ✓ Ashgabat - Explore Turkmenistan's remarkable capital city, a rich mix of ancient and modern
- ✓ Khiva - Discover the historic heart of one of the great Silk Road cities
- ✓ Bokhara - Guided visits to the Abdul Khan Madrasah and the Emir's Palace
- ✓ Samarkand - Marvel at Tamerlane's magnificent city, including Registan Square and the Shah-i-Zinda
- ✓ Tashkent - Mingle with the locals at Chorsu market in the vibrant Uzbek capital

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 9 nights Standard Hotel
3 nights Simple Hotel
1 night Simple
Overnight Train

Included Meals: 13 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Ashgabat

End Point: Trip ends: Tashkent

Transport: Bus, Train

Countries: Turkmenistan,
Uzbekistan



Wonders Of The Silk Road

We discover the culture and history of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and as we explore the ancient sites and ruins of the UNESCO World Heritage site at Merv and the Parthian Fortress of Nisa. We also explore the fabled Silk Road cities of Samarkand, Ashgabat, Bokhara and Khiva.

Why Book this trip

This holiday combines two 'stans' of Central Asia. You will journey along parts of the ancient Silk Road and encounter friendly locals as you learn about the rich history of the region. This tour is ideal for travellers who are interested in culture, architecture and desert scenery. Uzbekistan has been named as one of the top emerging destinations of 2015.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

DAY 1 Trip starts in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Trip starts in Ashgabat. Today has been left free with no planned activities, as most international flights arrive into the city late this evening or early the following morning.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Free morning and afternoon city tour

This morning is left free to relax. In the afternoon our tour starts today in the city of Ashgabat, a once prosperous frontier town along the Trans-Caspian railway that was completely destroyed by a massive earthquake in 1948, only to rise from its ashes and rubble to become the capital of an independent Turkmenistan in 1991. The city then became the personal project of President Niyazov, who set about forming it in his own unique image, renaming the streets and changing the face of the city on an almost daily basis as he approved the destruction of its suburbs to make way for a number of controversial planning projects. In the afternoon we have an opportunity to explore the city on a tour that will take in some of the highlights of both the Soviet and Niyazov reigns. We visit Independence Park where we will see the Independence Monument, a large structure designed to resemble traditional Turkmen hats. We will also pay a visit to the Turkmenistan National Museum of History, a rich cache of some 150,000 objects and artefacts that date back to Neolithic times and the Bronze Age era of the Margiana civilisation.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 In Ashgabat, visit Sunday market and Nissa Fortress; free afternoon

This morning we aim to visit the city's lively Sunday morning market before driving out to the outskirts of the city to the once mighty fortress of Nissa. Founded in the 3rd century BC as the capital of the 1st Parthian Empire, its walls and towers (43 in total) protected the royal palace, Zoroastrian temples and the power and prestige of successive ruling dynasties until its eventual destruction at the hands of the Mongols in the 13th century.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Drive to Mary stopping at Kaka Oasis

Our destination today is the town of Mary, our gateway to the ruins of ancient Merv. We travel via the Kaka Oasis and will also stop to view the fortress of Abiverd, the remains of a now long vanished medieval city that once enjoyed a reputation for its superb handicrafts, some samples of which can still be seen littered across the site in the form of broken shards of exquisite pottery

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 From Mary, explore the ancient site of Merv; afternoon visit to Mary Historical Museum

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, considered to have once been one of the great cities of Central Asia, the remains of ancient Merv lie scattered across some 100sq km. Lying along the great trading routes of the Silk Road the city prospered under the Sassanians and the Seljuq Turks, becoming a cultural mecca for Christian, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and finally Muslim cultures. At its height, during the 11th and 12th centuries the city was known as Marv-i-shah-jahan (Merv, Queen of the World) and, after Baghdad, was considered the finest city in all Islam. In 1221 its greatness came crashing to earth with the arrival of the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan when, after refusing to pay tribute to the great Mongol warlord, the city and its entire population of nearly 1 million people was put to the sword (it was believed that the Mongol soldiers were ordered to personally behead between 300- 400 people each). Returning to Mary for lunch we will then spend the afternoon exploring the Mary Museum of History, a rich repository of some of the finest relics rescued from Merv itself, along with an excellent collection of Turkmen carpets and household objects that span a period of some 5000 years.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Drive across the border to Bokhara (Uzbekistan); afternoon orientation walk

This morning we drive to the Turkmenistan/Uzbekistan border at Farab and, after completing the immigration formalities, cross into Uzbekistan. Please be advised that this process could take anything up to 2 hours and you will be required to walk the 1.5 km between the two border posts to meet our Uzbek vehicle (porters are usually available to help with luggage, although they will require payment for their services). We drive on to the fabled city of Bokhara, the city that was home to the famed poets Firdausi and Rudaki and is still considered by many to be the 'Bastion of Islam'. For generations Bokhara lay at the centre of the great trade routes, its scholarship and architecture revered far and wide as one of the central bastions of Central Asian art and culture, a factor that saw its ancient heart accredited by UNESCO as an important World Heritage Site in 1993. Over 2,000 years old, its historic centre is one of the most

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complete examples of a medieval city anywhere in Central Asia, filled with majestic architecture, beautiful madrassas and fabulous tombs. Time allowing this afternoon, we'll start our sightseeing with a visit to the bath houses, arcades and the caravanserai of the Taqi Telpak Furushon area, as well as the Lyab-I Hauz, a magnificent architectural centrepiece that dates from the 16th and 17th centuries and contains the largest madrassa in the city (the Kukeldash).

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 In Bokhara, discover the Ark Citadel, Emir's Palace and Char Minar Mosque

In the morning we take a drive out of the city to visit the Emir's Palace, the Royal Ark and the photogenic Char Minar Mosque. Also known as the 'Palace of Moon-like Stars', the Palace contains the famous White Hall, a structure that took the Emir's 30 architects two years to construct. We also visit the Ismael Samani Mausoleum, dating from the 9th century and considered to be one of the most revered architectural sights in the whole of Central Asia. Built as the final resting place of Ismael Samani, the founder of the last Persian dynasty to rule in the region, the Samanids, it harks back to the city's golden age, when it was the intellectual centre of the Islamic world. Returning to the city for lunch we will then take a tour of its ancient centre on foot, maybe stopping off at a 'chaikhana', a local tea house.. The old town has been fortunate to retain much of its Uzbek character, with more than 140 unique monuments littered amongst its streets and alleyways, and this afternoon we will visit the beautiful blue tiled Abdul Khan Madrasah and Mghoki Arrar Mosque, as well as the tallest monument in town, the Kalyan minaret, or the 'Tower of Death', from which prisoners were once hurled to their death on market days.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Free day in Bokhara for further exploration

Today is free to explore Bokhara in your own time.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Drive through the Kyzylkum desert to Khiva

Today we drive on to the remarkable ancient city of Khiva. The early history of the area is still sketchy, but by the time the Arabs arrived in the 8th century there were three important cities in the region, of which Khiva was one, largely on account of its strategic location along the Volga branch of the Silk Route. Conquered by the Persians, it then became a pawn in the great game between the Russian and British Empires, finally succumbing to Russian forces in 1873 (following the fate of both Samarkand and Bokhara before it). Its ancient heart has remained largely intact behind towering brick walls, some 40 bastions enclosing an incredible collection of historic monuments and 18th and 19th century houses and exploring the old citadel is like stepping back in time into a scene straight out of the stories of the Arabian nights. Originally the 12th century fortress dominated the city, but later additions of palaces, harems, barracks and mosques encroached on the old fortress, compelling the Khan to build a second outer wall to make his citadel even more secure. Please note that today's drive to Khiva is a long drive of approximately 9hrs due to the bad road conditions in this area. We will attempt to break up the journey as much as possible with stops along the way.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 In Khiva, orientation tour of the Old City; drive to Urgench to take sleeper train to Samarkand

This morning we will begin our exploration of this ancient city. We'll take in some of its rich wonders including the Kunya Ark and the Tah-Khauili Palace, whilst a walk up the steps of the Dzhusma Minaret presents a captivating panoramic view of the maze of streets below. In the afternoon we drive on to Urgench to catch the overnight train to Samarkand.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 In Samarkand, discover Registan Square, Gur Emir Mausoleum and Bibi-Khanym Mosque

Stormed by Alexander the Great and reduced to ashes by Genghis Khan, Samarkand was nevertheless transformed into one of the world's most glittering cities in the 14th century by Tamerlane, who made it his capital. Today it is still generously endowed with

some glorious monuments to its golden era, their blue domes towering above the city skyline. Our overnight train arrives in the city early morning and after transferring to our hotel for breakfast, we plan to set out and explore some of its wealth of treasures. Most of the city's more lavish monuments date to the time of Tamerlane and his direct descendants, including the exceptional Registan, the focal point of the city and one of Central Asia's most magnificent settings; a majestic square formed on 3 sides by huge blue tiled madrasahs (ancient centres of religious learning). We will also visit the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, constructed by Tamerlane's Chinese wife and once one of the grandest mosques in the entire Islamic world, with a gateway that measured an impressive 35m in height. The third visit of the morning will be to the Gur Emir Mausoleum, a somewhat modest structure that nonetheless contains the graves of not only Tamerlane himself, but also two of his sons and two grandsons. The afternoon is left free to relax or explore more by yourself.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 In Samarakand, visit Ulug-Beg Observatory and the Shah-i-Zinda; free afternoon

Another half-day city tour this morning introduces us to the Ulug-Beg Observatory and the Shah-i-Zinda, one of the city's oldest and most sacred buildings, with a double row of jewel-like mausoleums that are said to contain the grave of Qusam ibn-Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Mohammed. It was in Samarkand that Ulug-Beg, the great medieval astronomer, built the gigantic sextant that enabled him to calculate the length of a year to within just 10 seconds and the remnants of his 15th century astrolabe, which measured an impressive 30m, still remain on the outskirts of the old city. The rest of the day has then been left free to explore more of this exquisite city at your leisure, perhaps re-visiting Registan Square, or enjoying an excursion to the site of Afrosiab and Marakanda, where you will find the excavations of early Samarkand. The bazaar presents us with one of Samarkand's liveliest settings, an eclectic mix of sound and colour that harks back to the days of the great caravans that plied these ancient trading routes, whilst the old town itself still holds considerable medieval charm and along its sun-baked, winding, narrow alleys traditionally dressed locals perform their daily rituals or relax in the shade drinking 'kokchai' (traditional green tea).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Drive to Tashkent, explore the city and ride the Tashkent Metro

This morning we drive to Tashkent, the Uzbek capital and one of Central Asia's most vibrant cities. Occupying a prime spot on the central Eurasian trading routes, Tashkent grew to be one of the most important stops on the caravan routes across Central Asia. It grew under the auspices of the Mongols, Tamerlane and the Shaybanids, before finally falling to the Russians during the 19th century. A massive earthquake destroyed much of the city in 1966, affording its Russian overlords the chance to resurrect a 'perfect' soviet city from the ruins. Parts of the old city do remain though and we explore in afternoon. A visit to Chor-Su affords us the opportunity to take a look at the handicraft bazaar, before moving on to some of the city's more modern monuments, including the Mustakillik Square (Independence Square), the Navoi Theatre (named after the renowned Uzbek poet) and the Earthquake Monument. We also take a ride for 2-3 stops on the Tashkent Metro, which boasts some flamboyantly decorated stations.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Tour ends in Tashkent

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Turkmenistan

Lunch £: 4.00

Dinner £: 6.00

Uzbekistan

Lunch £: 6.00 - 8.00

Dinner £: 6.00 - 10.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Turkmenistan

Bottle of Beer £: 1.40

Water £: 0.80

Uzbekistan

Bottle of Beer £: 1.40

Water £: 0.70

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx US\$ 60 for gratuities for local staff.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Turkmenistan

ATM Availability: Very limited, do not rely upon this.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited usually to larger outlets and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Manat.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills in small denominations.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Uzbekistan

ATM Availability: Very limited, do not rely upon this.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited usually to larger outlets and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Sum

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills in small denominations.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

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We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Turkmenistan: A single entry visa is required for Turkmenistan. Prior authorisation from the Turkmen authorities is required for UK citizens. Explore will obtain this on your behalf. Overseas passengers must check with the relevant consulate and if you require an authorisation letter please contact Explore immediately. Please note that the Embassy of Turkmenistan in London does not accept cheques. On arrival in Turkmenistan, you must complete a migration card and pay a US\$12 migration fee (\$10 fee plus \$2 Admin charge). The authorities will retain the card.

We are required by the authorities to have a representative meet you at the airport upon arrival, Land Only customers should ensure they have submitted their flight details to Explore at least 1 month before departure.

Uzbekistan: A single entry visa is required for all nationalities before arrival into Uzbekistan. Some nationalities (not UK citizens) may be required to provide an authorisation letter from the Uzbek authorities in support of their visa application. Please contact your nearest embassy to check the requirements. If you require an authorisation letter please contact Explore immediately. It can take up to 8 weeks to obtain both the visas required for the tour; so you may be without your passport for this period of time. Allow approximately £200 for visas and visa service charges if applying in the UK. Costs in other countries may vary.

You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure and check that your visa dates match your dates of travel. PLEASE NOTE: it is not possible to obtain the Turkmenistan authorisation any earlier than 8 weeks prior to the tour departure date and it takes 3 weeks to process. Given these time constraints we do not recommend prior travel during this time before the tour starts.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Turkmenistan

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on the need for and different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Turkmenistan has banned the sale of all tobacco products and prohibited smoking in ALL public places including streets, parks, airports etc. Smoking is only permitted in public in designated areas in hotels and restaurants. New regulations only permit the import of a MAXIMUM of 2 packets of 20 cigarettes per person.

Uzbekistan

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on the need for and different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Turkmenistan

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit, when the temperatures are mild and there is the chance of occasional rains. April can bring colourful blooms to the normally barren desert landscapes, whilst summer days in the cities and desert can be very hot, when the temperatures can reach as high as 50°.

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Clothing

Lightweight raingear may be needed, with some warmer clothes for the cooler evenings, when temperatures can drop considerably. It gets very hot in the summer so long sleeves and a hat may be useful to help keep cool. Casual clothes are the most practical: tight fitting garments, brief shorts and skirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention and these regions follow the strict tenets of the Muslim faith.

Equipment

Torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sun cream, good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection.

Footwear

Light walking boots/comfortable walking shoes, trainers and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece and a daysac. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage – so don't overload yourself. We recommend either a suitcase or holdall on wheels, or else a backpack, as you may be expected to carry your own luggage up to 1.5km across the border.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,000,000

Size of Country: 488,100 sq km

Major Language: Turkmen, Russian, Uzbek

Religion: Islam, Eastern Orthodox

Time Difference to GMT: +5

Uzbekistan

Population: 32,000,000

Size of Country: 447,400 sq km

Major Language: Uzbek, Russian, Tajik

Religion: Islam, predominantly Sunni, Eastern Orthodox

Time Difference to GMT: +5

Electric Supply & Plugs

Turkmenistan

2 Pin Round

Uzbekistan

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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