

Imagine a country whose landscape is dominated by snow-capped mountains. Where herders herd cattle across lush fields and where circular nomadic yurts regularly punctuate the landscape. A country which was once at the crossroads of trading routes between China, the Middle East, and Europe, and whose culture has been heavily influenced by these places. This is the country of Kyrgyzstan, a beautiful yet rarely visited country perched on the mountains of Central Asia.

Our *Untouched Kyrgyzstan* itinerary aims to give travelers a taste of this less-visited country's rich and interesting culture, and experience life as locals live it. We cover the country from North to South, travel across steppes, mountains, lakes, rivers, and streams, and stay at homes of a diverse mix of families to have an authentic taste of Kyrgyzstan and its people.

### **Day 1 Bishkek**

The tour starts at midday in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Capital. We will walk the streets of Bishkek, where streets are flanked by numerous monumental brutalist-style buildings built by the Soviets. Many buildings still have Soviet emblems affixed on their facades. Lenin, Karl & Engels still stand atop pedestals in many of Bishkek's parks. Some of the places we will be visiting include the Kyrgyz Parliament, the Wedding Palace, and the city's main post office building.

During our time in the city, we will travel using the city's extensive trolley bus network, which is one of the world's largest.

We would also sample the food of the Dungan people, a people whose origins trace back to ancient China.



### **Day 2 Bishkek – Balykchy – Karakol**

In the morning, we will leave Bishkek for Balykchy, a town on the shores of Lake Issy Kul. It used to be an industrial town during Soviet times. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the town has lost much of its industrial base. Today, many industrial complexes dating back to the Soviet-era stand decaying.

After exploring Balykchy, we will head to Kok-Moinok Canyon where we will have a hike to see its Martian-like landscapes of red clay mountains. Then, we'll drive along the shores of Lake Issy Kul to the town of Karakol. Nestled in the northern Tian Shan Mountains, this turquoise lake is one of the largest and deepest lakes in the world. We'll end the day relaxing in the famous Aksu hot springs perched in the mountains.



### Day 3 Karakol – Jetti Oguz

We'll to learn about the Dungan people and their largely rich yet unknown culture. We'll sample the famous cold noodle Dungan dish – Ashlyanfu. Then we'll explore a unique Chinese-style mosque. We will have lunch with a local Dungan family in Yirdik village. They'll introduce us to their rich and enigmatic traditions, their interesting cuisine which is a fusion of Chinese and Central Asian cuisines, and their language – a variety of Chinese that is related to ancient Chinese that the Dungan people still speak.





#### **Day 4 Jeti Oguz – Bokonbaevo**

We'll explore the intriguing landscapes around Jeti Oguz village and hike towards the Maiden Tears Waterfall. Then we'll head to a viewpoint to soak in the breathtaking views of Lake Issy Kul, stopping by on the way to see a surreal monument dedicated to the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin.

#### **Day 5 Bokonbaevo – Toktogul**

We will be visiting an abandoned city, Kaji-Say.

Then having well explored northern Kyrgyzstan, we'll now dip South. We'll drive from Bishkek to Osh on one of the most beautiful and scenic roads in the world, passing through two passes that are at an elevation of 3000 meters. This road snakes past turquoise lakes, snow-capped mountains, Martian landscapes, quaint villages, and cattle grazing wide and open fields.





### **Day 6 Toktogul – Borbash**

We'll start the morning by taking in the breathtaking views of Toktogul reservoir – Central Asia's largest fresh water reservoir – and its surrounding sky-reaching peaks. Then we'll continue our drive down south to the village of Borbash. We've officially entered southern Kyrgyzstan.

### **Day 7 – 9 Borbash**

The Muzayev family warmly welcomes you to stay at their home for a few days in the Kyrgyz countryside. Experience living in their village Borbash and get a taste of life and customs in the rural, peaceful and picturesque Ferghana Valley.

The women of this family of bakers and farmers will also teach you how to cook plov, a traditional rice and meat dish, over an open-air fire.

During your stay here, we will visit traditional Kyrgyz bazaars where produce, food, livestock and traditional garments are sold.

End the day with a trip to the village's banya, a traditional sauna house.





### **Day 10 Sary Mogol**

Time to explore the Pamir Mountains of southern Kyrgyzstan. We'll enjoy the pristine views of some of the tallest peaks in the world, some of them reaching altitudes of more than 7000 meters. We'll spend the night in the cozy comfort of a traditional nomadic yurt. At night, spend the night chatting with your travel mates. Or, look up, gaze and marvel at the sight of the milky way.

### **Day 11 Sary Mogol – Horse and yak riding**

We'll spend the day travelling on horseback towards Lenin's Peak Basecamp – the basecamp where many climbers and expeditioners set out from on their ascent of Lenin Peak, one of the tallest mountains in the world – and to Tulpar Kul, a lake perched in the middle of mountains. In the evening, we'll return to Borbash.





### Day 12 Back to Bishkek

After breakfast, we will fly back from Borbash to Bishkek, where the tour concludes. Customers can choose to also travel by train instead to Tashkent, Uzbekistan where there may be better flight options back to their home countries.

