Tajikistan & Turkmenistan: Mountains, Lakes, Sand & Marble

(13 days, 12 nights)

Page 2: Brief Itinerary
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Start point: Tashkent, Uzbekistan
End point: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

13 Days, 12 nights

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Day	Start Place	Morning Plan	Afternoon Plan	Evening Plan	End Place	Accommodation
1	Tashkent Uzbekistan	**8am – Tour starts** **Travel by Mashrutka to Oybek Border crossing, and cross the border into Tajikistan. (1 hour)** **Then continue the journey to Khujand on shared-taxi. (2 hours)**	**Arrival in Khujand** Visit the **Sheikh Muslihiddin Mosque and minaret** **Panjshanbe Bazaar** **Khujand Fortress** **Kamoli Khujand Mausoleum**	Arbob Palace, place where Tajik president during Civil War in Tajikistan. Visit to local music studio, where local musicians record local folks songs using handmade local musical instruments.	Khujand Tajikistan	Guesthouse
2	Khujand Tajikistan	**Drive to Istaravshan, a town of more than 2500 years of history. (2 hours)** Explore **Bozor-e-Markazi**, biggest Bazaar of Central Asia. See crafting of traditional swords and knives (Rastai-e Kord). Visit the Bust of Lenin, the largest Lenin statue in Central Asia built during Soviet times.	**Drive to Dushanbe, the Tajik capital (7 hours)** Scenic drive to Dushanbe **on Soviet-built highways** that snakes through mountain and valleys. **Highest elevation of 4000 metres, and 2 Soviet-built tunnels of 5-kilometre length**.	**Arrival in Dushanbe** Explore **Maydoni Dustii**, public square with the tallest flag pole in the world, and Rudaki Park**.**	Dushanbe Tajikistan	Guesthouse
3	Dushanbe Tajikistan	**Drive to Hissor (1 hour)** Explore the 2500 year-old **Hissor Fortress and madrassah**.	**Drive to Iskandarkul Lake via Dushanbe (4 hours)** Hike at **Iskandarkul Lake**, named after Alexander the Great, and hike up **Iskandarkul Lake waterfall**	**HOMESTAY AT ISKANDARKUL** *Explore local life in the mountainous and rural Iskandarkul region with a local homestay*	Iskandarkul Tajikistan	Homestay
4	Iskandarkul Tajikistan	**Drive to Fann Mountains via Panjakent (5 hours)**	Lunch and hike at **Fann Mountains** and at **Seven Lakes**.	**HOMESTAY AT SEVEN LAKES** *Explore local life in the remote Seven Lakes region with a local homestay*	Seven Lakes Tajikistan	Homestay
5	Seven Lakes Tajikistan	Breakfast and morning hike at the Seven Lakes	**Drive from Seven Lakes to Panjakent (3 hours)** **Arrival at Panjakent** Visit **to archaeological site of Sarazm**, ruins of 5,500 years old. Hke along the raging rapids of the Zaravshan river, one of the main rivers of Tajikistan Explore remnants of the cities Soviet's past, from it's brutalist government buldings to its large public square.	Overnight in Panjakent	Panjakent Tajikistan	Guesthouse
6	Panjrud Tajikistan	**Travel from Panjakent, Tajikistan to Samarkand, Uzbekistan via the Tajik-Uzbek border in Panjakent**	**Arrival in Samarkand, Uzbekistan** **Travel from Samarkand to Bukhara by train** **Arrival in Bukhara**	Explore the historical city of Bukhara through a street and alleyway walking tour.	Bukhara Uzbekistan	Guesthouse
7	Bukhara Uzbekistan	**Drive to Farap border crossing (1 hour)** **Cross Uzbek-Turkmen border at Farap.** **Drive from Farap to Mary, Turkmenistan (4 hours)**	**Arrival in Mary** Sightseeing of ancient Merv **Ancient Merv** Visit the **Oasis Merv**, one of the most ancient regions of Central Asia, **Soltan Sanzhar Mausoleum, and the Small and Big Gyz-Kala** – 6th century ancient fortress along Silk Road.	Visit the **Ibn Zeid Mausoleum, Sardoba** - place of pilgrimage (XII century) **Overnight train to Ashgabat (7 hours)**	TRAIN	OVERNIGHT TRAIN
8	TRAIN	**Arrival in Ashgabat** **ASHGABAT CITY TOUR** Visit the following places: **- National Wedding palace of Turkmenistan** **- Arch of Neutrality & Independence Park** **- Ferries Wheel** **- Constitution tower**			Ashgabat Turkmenistan	Hotel
9	Ashgabat Turkmenistan	**ASHGABAT CITY TOUR** Visit **the National Carpet Museum of Turkmenistan** and **the Gokdepe Private Horse Farm**	**Drive to Kov Ata (1 hour)** Hike and swim in **the Kov Ata underground lake**, an all-year-round warm lake. **Drive to Nohur village (1 hour)**	**Arrival at Nohur village for a homestay with a local family.** ***(Dinner included in price)***	Nohur Village Turkmenistan	Homestay
10	Nohur Village Turkmenistan	Drive to **the Yangikala Canyon** in Western Turkmenistan (6 hours)	Arrival at **Yangikala Canyon** Hike and lunch at Yangikala Canyon ***(Lunch included in price)*** **Travel to the ancient shrines of Gozli Ata and Gaytarmysh Ata shrines pilgrimage (2 hours)**	**Return to Nohur village (4 hours)** **Homestay with a local family.** ***(Dinner included in price)***	Nohur Village Turkmenistan	Homestay
11	Nohur Village Turkmenistan	**Early morning drive to Ashgabat, the Turkmen capital** Visit the following places: - **the State Historical Museum**, **- the Old Nisa**, 2300 year old ruins and a UNESCO World Heritage site, - **the "Gulistan" Russian Market**	**Drive to Darvaza Gas Crater through the Karakurum Desert (4 hours)** Visit and walk along **Karakum spark** and **Darvaza gas crater**	**OVERNIGHT STAY IN A YURT** Overnight yurt stay in a traditional Turkmen desert yurt near Darvaza gas crater. ***(Dinner included in price)***	Darvaza Turkmenistan	Yurt
12	Darvaza Turkmenistan	**Drive to Konya Urgench (5 hours)**	**VISIT TO OLD CITY OF KUNYA URGENCH, UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE** Visit the following places: 1. Il Arslan mausoleum - the oldest building in the city (XI century) 2. Fahraddin Razi Mausoleum XII C…. 3 Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum XII C 4. Kutlug Timur minaret - (XII-XIV centuries) - the highest minaret in Central Asia 5. Turabek Hanum mausoleum - (XII-XIV centuries)	Travel to Koneurgench, Turkmenistan	Koneurgench Turkmenistan	Hotel
13	Koneurgench Turkmenistan	**Travel to Dashoguz, Turkmenistan and cross the Turkmen-Uzbek border.** **Travel to Urgench, Uzbekistan.**	**Arrival in Urgench, Uzbekistan** **Domestic flight from Urgench to Tashkent (2 hours)**	**12am – End of tour**	Tashkent Uzbekistan	

We will make every effort to keep itineraries as described and to find suitable replacements if needed. However, we reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary without prior notice in response to unforeseeable events and safety concerns. We also reserve the right to make changes to the itinerary should we deem that a certain activity is beyond the capability of any of our travelers.

UZBEKISTAN	TAJIKISTAN	TURKMENISTAN

Day 1 – From Bazaars to Borders: Into Tajikistan

Start in Uzbekistan's capital and cross into Tajikistan, where Silk Road echoes mix with Soviet legacies and centuries-old Persian charm.

- Depart Tashkent at 8 am and drive for 1 hour to the Uzbek-Tajik border at Oybek (1 hour)
- Cross into Tajikistan and continue the drive for 2 hours to Khujand, the main city of northern Tajikistan
- Wander through Khujand's vibrant Panjshanbe Bazaar, one of Central Asia's oldest markets, and admire the intricate architecture of Sheikh Muslihiddin Mosque.
- Explore Khujand Fortress and the Kamoli Khujand Mausoleum, where centuries of Persian, Sogdian, and Soviet history echo through stone and story.
- Visit the Arbob Palace, where Tajikistan's civil war leadership once convened
- Visit a local music recording studio, where Tajik folksongs are played using traditional musical instruments.



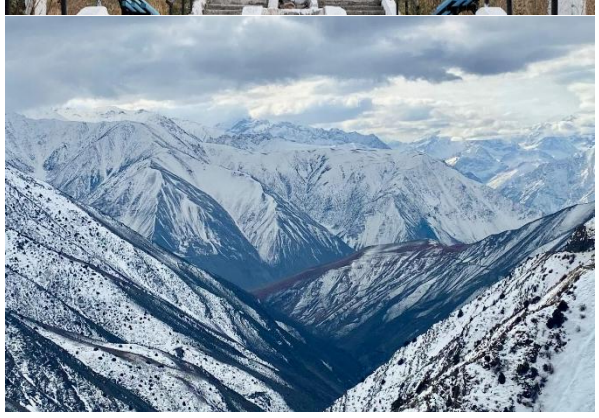



Accommodation: Guesthouse in Khujand

Day 2 – Istaravshan's Swordsmiths & The Road to Dushanbe

Travel back in time in Istaravshan's ancient bazaar before venturing down Soviet-built highways through towering mountains.

- Drive 2 hours to Istaravshan, one of Tajikistan's oldest towns — founded over 2,500 years ago and once a key stop on the Silk Road.
- Visit the Bust of Lenin, the largest Lenin statue in Central Asia built during Soviet times
- Explore Bozor-e-Markazi, the largest bazaar in Central Asia, alive with spices, textiles, and local chatter.
- Visit Rastai-e Kord, where traditional blacksmiths still forge curved swords and knives using ancient techniques.
- Continue the 7-hour drive to Dushanbe, winding through the majestic Zarafshan range with high passes (up to 4000m), plunging valleys, and Soviet-era tunnels.
- Unwind in Dushanbe's city centre, strolling through Rudaki Park and Maydoni Dustii Square — home to fountains, monuments, and the world's tallest flagpole.



Accommodation: Guesthouse in Dushanbe

Day 3 – Fortress Echoes & Lakeside Tranquility

From the edges of Dushanbe to a hidden lake in the highlands, today blends history with mountain calm.

- Drive 1 hour to Hissor Fortress, once a stronghold along ancient trade routes.
- Visit a local historic madrassah (religious school) in Hissor
- Continue 4 hours to Lake Iskandarkul, winding through dramatic snow-capped mountain passes, deep gorges, and remote valleys
- Hike along the Iskandarkul's turquoise shore
- Hike to a nearby waterfall tumbling through rugged cliffs.
- Arrive at a lakeside homestay, where a warm meal and mountain hospitality await.
- Spend the night nestled in the Fann Mountains, under crisp air and starlit silence.

Accommodation: Homestay in Iskandarkul






Day 4 – Into the Fanns: Seven Lakes & Highland Life

A day for alpine colors, hiking, and soulful stillness.

- Scenic mountain drive to the Seven Lakes (Haftkul) via Panjakent (5 hours)
- Afternoon hike around the lakes and Fann Mountain trails
- Explore nearby remote and local villages
- Visits to hubs of rural village life, such as the local school, bazaars and community events
- Settle into a local homestay by the lakes, immersed in mountain life

Accommodation: Homestay in Seven Lakes






Day 5 – Mountain Morning, Ancient City

From snow-fed lakes to ancient stone, trace a path from wilderness to ruins.

- Enjoy a peaceful morning breakfast and a hike among the turquoise waters of the Seven lakes
- Drive 2–2.5 hours from Seven Lakes to Panjakent via mountain dirt roads and valleys
- In Panjakent, visit the UNESCO-listed ruins of Sarazm, dating back 5,500 years
- Hike along the raging rapids of the Zaravshan rivers, one of the main rivers in Tajikistan
- Discover Panjakent's Soviet past, with visits to its large Soviet public square and brutalist government offices

Accommodation: Guesthouse in Panjakent



Day 6 – Trade nature for ancient history

From snow-fed lakes to ancient stone, trace a path from wilderness to ruins.

- Cross the Tajik–Uzbek border near Panjakent, Tajikistan and continue toward Samarkand, Uzbekistan (1 hour drive)
- Travel by train from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to the historical Uzbek city of Bukhara (3 hours)
- Roam the storied alleyways and streets of Bukhara, home to numerous centuries-old buildings dating back to the Silk Road period
- Visit monuments and religious sites dating back to the ancient Silk Road era
- Visit the historical Bukhara Synagogue that once served Central Asia's largest Jewish population

Accommodation: Guesthouse in Bukhara



Day 7 – Into Turkmenistan: Silk Road Ruins & Desert Trains

Step back into antiquity as you cross yet another border — this time into a land of vast silence, eccentric structures, and ancient fortresses.

- Drive 1 hour to Farap, and cross the Uzbek-Turkmen border into Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan
- Explore Turkmenabat, a quintessential Turkmen city home to large boulevards and marble-clad buildings
- Drive 4 hours across expansive semi-desert plains to Mary
- Discover Ancient Merv — once one of the largest cities on Earth, teeming with scholars and mystics
- Walk among the ruins of the Soltan Sanzhar Mausoleum and the twin Gyz-Kala fortresses
- Visit Ibn Zeid Mausoleum and Sardoba — places of pilgrimage surrounded by silence
- Board an overnight train to Ashgabat, rocked to sleep by the rhythm of the rails (7 hours)







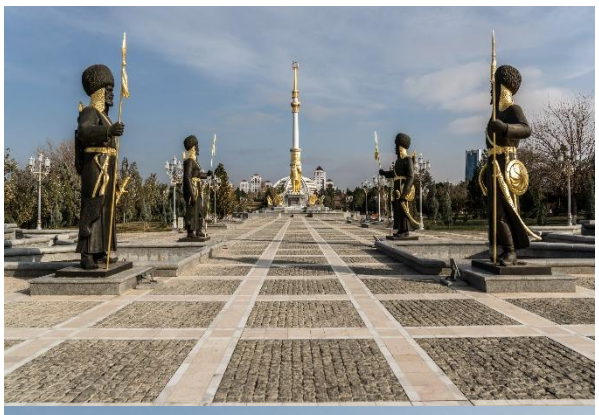


Accommodation: Overnight train Mary - Ashgabat

Day 8 – Ashgabat's Marble Madness

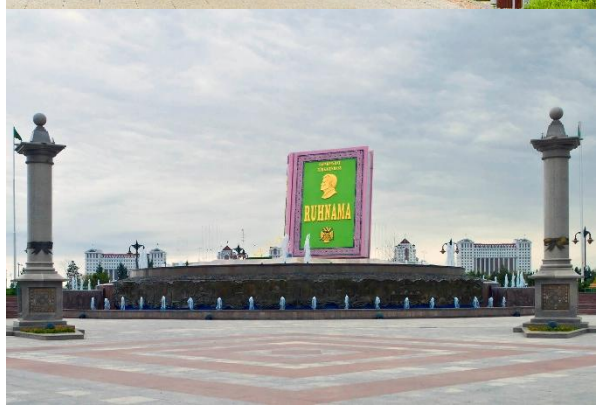
Wake up in the world's strangest capital — a surreal spectacle of marble, gold, and empty boulevards.

- Arrive in Ashgabat, a surreal capital of golden domes, endless marble, and immaculately polished but empty boulevards
- Stroll through Independence Park, and admire its fountains and flame-shaped monuments
- Ride the world's largest indoor Ferris wheel, standing oddly in a white-marble wasteland
- See the Constitution Tower — a monument to statehood, geometry, and extravagance
- Take in the sights of Ashgabat's numerous eccentric monuments, from its opulent white and gold National Wedding Palace, to its snake-shaped Ministry of Health building









Accommodation: Hotel in Ashgabat

Day 9 – Carpets, Caves & Mountainside Culture

From deep traditions to deep caverns, today reveals Turkmenistan's quieter soul.

- Visit the National Carpet Museum, home to the largest hand-woven carpet
- Drive 1 hour to a private Ahal-Teke horse farm — meet the golden stallions of Turkmen lore. This horse breed are a national pride and have a special place in Turkmen culture
- Drive 1 hour to Kov Ata underground lake and hike 20 minutes into its thermal caverns
- Swim in sulfuric waters located in a deep subterranean cavern, where temperatures are warm throughout the year
- Drive 1 hour into the Kopet Dag Mountains and arrive in the remote Nohur village
- Catch a rare glimpse into rural Turkmen life with a homestay with a local family in the secluded mountain village of Nohur

Accommodation: Homestay in Nohur village






Day 10 – Canyons of Fire & Sacred Shrines

Trace the curve of flaming cliffs and the silence of ancient pilgrimage sites.

- Drive 6 hours west to Yangikala Canyon — a Martian landscape of pink, red, and ochre cliffs and hills
- Enjoy a 1–2 hour hike along the canyon's rim, framed by steep drops and sweeping, solitary landscapes
- Picnic lunch atop a cliff, surrounded by one of Central Asia's most surreal landscapes
- Continue 2 hours to the Sufi shrines of Gozli Ata and Gaytarmysh Ata — spiritual landmarks etched into the desert
- Return 4-hour drive to Nohur for a quiet village dinner and overnight at the homestay
- Explore Nohur's unique skull-framed gravestones and play a game of football with local kids

Accommodation: Homestay in Nohur village






Day 11 – Ashgabat to the Gates of Hell

Travel from one extreme to another — from ancient ruins and idyllic village life to a ferocious inferno in a gaping crater.

- Drive 3.5 hours in the morning to Ashgabat
- Visit the State Historical Museum and UNESCO-listed ruins of Old Nisa
- Browse the Soviet-style Gulistan Market, bursting with bread, pickles, and enamelware
- Drive for 4 hours across the vast and desolate Karakum Desert to reach the Darvaza Gas Crater — the infamous “Door to Hell”
- Walk the crater’s rim at sunset as flames rise from the earth
- Overnight in a traditional Turkmen yurt, crafted from camel hide, sheepskin, and timber, and enjoy spectacular views of the milky way at night

Accommodation: Yurt stay near Darvaza gas crater





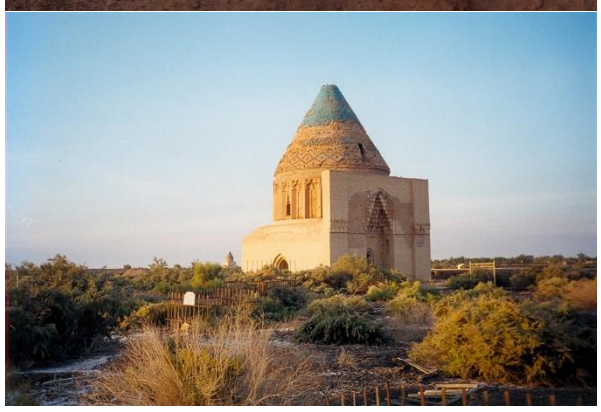
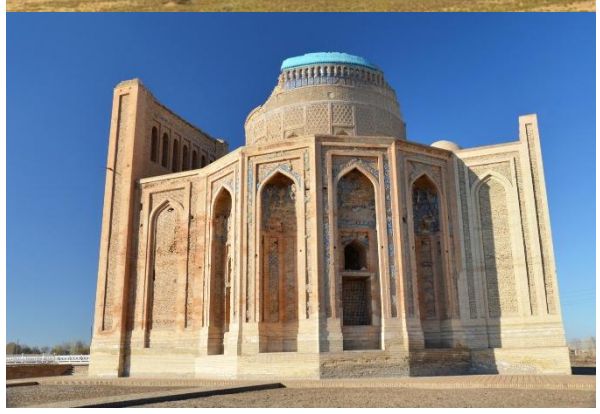

Day 12 – Kingdoms in Ruins

North through the desert to the windswept echoes of empire.

- Journey 5 hours through the stark emptiness of the Karakum Desert en route to the ancient UNESCO site of Kunya Urgench
- Visit the Kutlug Timur minaret — tallest in Central Asia (over 60 metres)
- Explore the mausoleums of Il Arslan, Sultan Tekesh, and Turabek Hanum — adorned with turquoise tiles
- Reflect among the Sufi tombs and cracked stone monuments of this forgotten capital

Accommodation: Hotel in Koneurgench



Day 13 – Back to Uzbekistan: End of the Line

One final journey through border posts and airport terminals — returning to where it all began.

- Travel from Koneurgench to Dashoguz, Turkmenistan and cross the Turkmen–Uzbek border (2 hours)
- Drive to Urgench, Uzbekistan (1 hour)
- If time permitting, explore the ancient Uzbek city of Khiva, a UNESCO site
- Board a domestic flight (2 hours) from Urench to Tashkent
- Arrive in Tashkent by 12:00 AM (Next day) — end of tour

Accommodation: Yurt stay near Darvaza gas crater