



# Discover Kyrgyzstan

Culture and nature

13-day guided tour through mountains and past lakes



### Day 1: Bishkek

Your flight from Moscow to Bishkek will land in the afternoon. We will pick you up from the airport and transfer you to a pleasant 3\* hotel where you can refresh yourself. When you're ready, we will do a short Bishkek tour with our guide to get acquainted with the city. Bishkek is a textbook example of Soviet city planning, with wide, straight roads and somewhat oversized buildings. On day 12 of this trip we will explore the city more thoroughly.

From seven o'clock onwards we will enjoy a traditional dinner before we return to the hotel.

### Day 2: Bishkek – Toktogul, 350 km, 100% tarmac

After a relaxed breakfast we pick up our 4X4s at 10am, have lunch and drive to the Toktogul water reservoir. The road takes us West and is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful of the country. The views are breath-taking, with impressive mountains and valleys. We cross the Tue Ashuu pass, more than 3000 meters high. We stop frequently to give you time to take pictures.

We stay overnight in a guesthouse.

### Day 3: Toktogul – Sary Chelek – Arslanbob, 470 km, 90% tarmac, 10% tracks

We leave at 8am for the Arslanbob walnut forest. We first head for the miraculous Lake Sary Chelek. The road takes us along vast mountain ranges and as ever we stop regularly for pictures. Lake Sary Chelek is in the middle of a national park at the foot of the Chatkal mountains, at an altitude of 1873 m. It is 234 meters deep, 2280 meters wide and 7500 meters long. It was the result of an earthquake. The water is so clear that you can see fish swimming and many-coloured stones on its bottom. It is surrounded by mountains perpetually covered in snow.

We drive on to Arslanbob, where some 1500 ton of walnuts are produced per year, making this the world's largest natural source of walnuts.

We spend the night in a homestay.

### Day 4: Arslanbob – Kazarman, 270 km, 40% tarmac, 60% tracks

Today we drive to Kazarman, a very remote village in the mountains. Nomads have lived here for centuries without changing much in their way of live. Today we will see this from close by. The route winds through mountains and along valleys.

We eat and sleep in a homestay.

### Day 5: Kazarman – Son Kul, 180 km, 10% tarmac, 90% tracks

After breakfast we head for the one but largest lake in Kyrgyzstan: Son Kul. Surrounded by mountains at 3013 meters, this is the highest altitude lake of Kyrgyzstan. For centuries nomads have come here to rest and use the pastures for their cattle. You will see herds of sheep, goats, yaks, horses and the odd cow. We will have lunch here and you will have the entire afternoon to explore this wonderful area. Have a walk along the shores of the lake or go into the mountains.

We eat and sleep in yurts, the traditional transportable tents of the nomads. They consist of a wooden frame and three layers of felt. Waterproof and warm.

The wash basins in the camp at Lake Son Kul are simple, clean and effective.

#### Day 6: drive round Son Kul, 145 km, 100% tracks

Today we take a tour round the lake to meet nomads, discovering their way of life, traditions and culture. Nomads are hospitable. It is perfectly normal for them to invite you into their homes: guests, in their view, have been sent by god. We drink tea and eat sweets; through our guide and interpreter we can talk to them.

We cross the 32 Parrots Pass. At its bottom we will stop by a river and walk to a nice waterfall.

We eat and sleep in a yurt.

#### Day 7: Son Kul – Tash Rabat, 255 km, 20% tarmac, 80% tracks

We move on. Today takes us to the Tash Rabat Karavanserai on the Silk Road. This is a stone, castle-like construction dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century of which nobody really knows its purpose. It is unique. Tash Rabat lies at an altitude of 3200 meters in the middle of the Tian Shan mountain range. It hides a total of 31 chambers; its walls are a meter thick. A subterranean room was possibly used as a prison. We will cross the 3000-meter-high Moldo Ashu pass, again of wondrous beauty.

We eat and sleep in yurts near Tash Rabat.

#### Day 8: Tash Rabat – Naryn, 115 km, 100% tarmac

In Tash Rabat you can have an interesting hike or ride on horseback in the morning. Horse riding is a fantastic way to move through the mountains, just as the locals do. After lunch we drive through the mountains to Naryn, a town in the middle of a valley.

We stay overnight in a guesthouse.

#### Day 9: Naryn – Tosor – Tamga, 365 km, 10% tarmac, 90% tracks

Just as you think things can't get any more spectacular, we cross the Tosor pass: 3950 meters high. You won't forget this easily. The views are unbelievable and change all the time. Make sure you have an extra memory card with you for your camera. We have a picnic, enjoying the silence and clean air. In the evening we arrive at Lake Issyk Kul, "the pearl of Central Asia". It is a vast, somewhat saline lake lying at 1608 meters high. In spite of this altitude and winter temperatures as low as -25° centigrade, it never freezes over. This is probably due to earth warmth and its slight saline water, but this phenomenon hasn't been fully explained yet. Before dinner you can have a walk to the lake.

We eat and sleep in a guesthouse.

#### Day 10: Tamga – Karakol, 120 km, 80 % tarmac, 20% tracks

Today we go through the Jeti Oguz Valley. Jeti Oguz is famous for its red rock formations, called *The Seven Bulls*. We also pass the *Mountains of the Broken Heart*. These names come from legends, which we will tell you about when we're there. We drive on to Karakol, a pleasant town. We visit the Dungan mosque, built in Chinese style, completely in wood without using any nails. We also visit an old wooden Orthodox church.

We eat and stay guesthouse.

**Dag 11: Karakol – Cholpon Ata, 190 km, 70 % tarmac, 30% tracks**

We drive along Lake Issyk Kul and come through the Semenovskoye and Grigorievskoye Valleys. These valleys twee valleys meet at the end. You drive in through one and out the other. We will see many yurts, have a picnic in nature, enjoy the peace and quiet.

Our dinner and overnight stay are in a hotel on the shores of the lake, with a fantastic beach.

**Dag 12: Issyk Kul Lake – Bishkek, 270 km, 100% tarmac**

We are back in the inhabited world and head for Bishkek. We visit a vast plain full of rocks and stones, many of which showing drawing going back to 800 BC. We make a detour to see the Burana Tower, a minaret from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the days of the Silk Toad it indicated there was town here. This has now completely disappeared. Next to the tower there is a field with so-called *Balbans* (stone warriors).

Back in Bishkek you will have a guided tour through the city. We will visit Pobeda Square, Duboviy Park, Ala-Too Square, the building of the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and more. As we walk around our guide will tell us about the chequered history of Kyrgyzstan.

We eat in a national restaurant and stay overnight in a hotel.

**Dag 13: Bazar and transfer to airport**

No visit to Bishkek is complete without having seen its lively bazar. Since the return flight leaves in the afternoon, we have time for a visit in the morning. After lunch, we will take care of your transfer to the airport.

**Overview of the route**

