

Chinese Turkestan & Central Asia

THE SILK ROAD THROUGH WESTERN CHINA AND THE FIVE 'STANS



photo: Vlad Ushakov

Setting up a Kyrgyz yurt

Silk, spices, tea, precious metals and jewels, carefully lashed to pack camels, made their way from one world to another along the old Silk Road. Follow in the footsteps of early explorers who plied these trade routes connecting East with West.

Days 1-6: Almaty, Urumqi, Kashgar, Shache, Taklamakan

Desert Assemble in Almaty, Kazakhstan's most important city, before heading into Western China, where Urumqi and Kashgar won renown as Silk Road centers. Browse the animal bazaar in Kashgar, still as exciting as in ancient times. Visit the oasis city of Shache and skirt the nearby Taklamakan Desert on camelback.

Day 7: Torugart Pass, Tash Rabat After driving over the 12,000-foot Torugart Pass into Kyrgyzstan, overnight near Tash Rabat, a 15th century stone caravanserai in a boundless alpine setting.

Days 8-13: Lake Issyk-Kul, Bishkek, Osh, Fergana Valley, Khujand Near high-altitude Lake Issyk-Kul, attend a demonstration of horse games and learn how to put up a yurt. Visit Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, and Osh, in the Fergana Valley, heart of Central Asian silk production. Cross the Tajik border for an overnight in Khujand, founded by Alexander the Great.

Days 14-21: Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva Drive to the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, and continue overland to the fabled Uzbek oases of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, finding gorgeous blue-tiled mosques and *madrassahs* in these World Heritage Sites.

Days 22-24: Tashauz, Ashkabad, Nisa

Nisa Fly to Turkmenistan's capital, Ashkabad, where gleaming new government buildings rub shoulders with traditional bazaars. Visit the UNESCO-listed ancient Parthian site of Nisa before celebrating the journey with a farewell dinner.



SMALL GROUP TOUR



24 Days

Explorer Series Land Tour

\$7,295 per person, double occupancy

Plus internal air \$750

(economy class, subject to change)

Partial single supplement \$995 (see page 103)

Comprehensive tour inclusions and special accommodation note on page 103

Group Size 5-12 travelers

2012 Land Tour Dates

May 9-June 1 • August 22-September 14

Stay a little longer... Spend more time in Central Asia with an Essential Series trip to Iran, page 57 or Turkmenistan, page 60.



photo: Mariana Noble

A stroll through the Registan

MIR Signature Experiences

- Skirt the Taklamakan Desert on camelback
- Learn how to assemble a nomadic Kyrgyz yurt at a demonstration near beautiful Lake Issyk-kul
- Visit silkmakers and ceramics masters in their Fergana Valley workshops