

Journey Idea to Kyrgyzstan & China
A Journey Along the Silk Route



Prepared for Steppes Travel Clients
18 Days

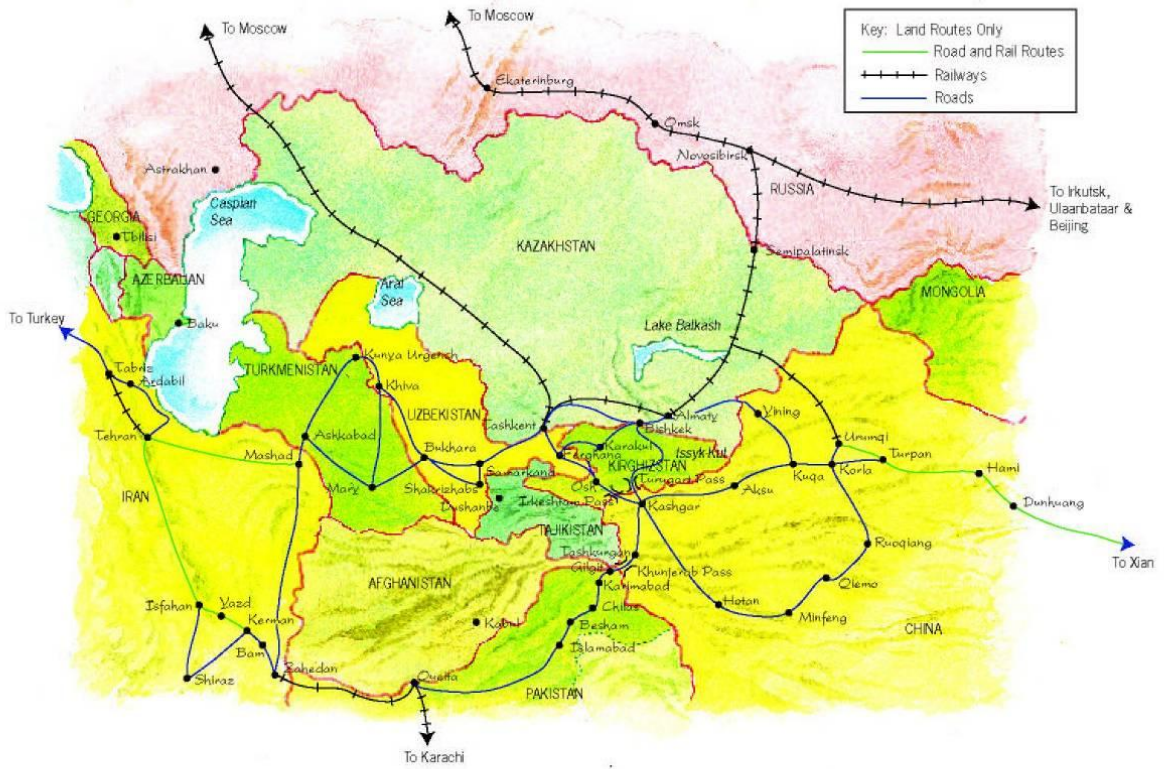
QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly London Heathrow / Bishkek (overnight)
Day 2	Arrive Bishkek
Day 3	Drive Bishkek / Lake Issyk-Kul
Day 4	Drive Lake Issyk-Kul / Tash Rabat
Day 5	Drive Tash Rabat / Kashgar
Day 6	Kashgar
Day 7	Train Kashgar / Turpan (overnight)
Day 8	Arrive Turpan
Day 9	Turpan
Day 10	Train Turpan / Dunhuang (overnight)
Day 11	Arrive Dunhuang
Day 12	Dunhuang
Day 13	Drive Dunhuang / Jiayuguan
Day 14	Fly Jiayuguan / Xian
Day 15	Xian
Day 16	Xian
Day 17	Fly Xian / Beijing
Day 18	Fly Beijing / London Heathrow

YOUR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Day	Route	Flight No.	Check in	Depart	Arrive
1	London Heathrow Terminal 1 / Bishkek	BD 991	08:50	10:50	03:10*
18	Beijing / London Heathrow Terminal 5	BA 038	09:15	11:15	15:10

* Arrival the following day



Steppe travel

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 (Monday)

London Heathrow / Bishkek

This morning depart London Heathrow on the British Midland BMI flight to Bishkek, flying overnight.

Day 2

Bishkek

Following your early morning arrival you will be met by your guide and transferred to the 4* Ak-Keme Hotel. The morning is at leisure.

The capital of Kyrgyzstan is built on a grid system with many tree-lined roads. It is surrounded by the snowy peaks of the Kyrgyz Ala-Too range.

After lunch you will have a tour of the city. Sites will include the Victory Monument built in 1984 to commemorate the 40th anniversary victory over Nazi Germany in WWII, Ala-Too Square where the Presidential Palace is located, Oak Park whose trees were planted in 1890 by A. Fetisov and now home to the Russian Drama Theatre, and the Open Air Sculpture Museum. Also visit the History Museum and Osh Bazaar, a great place to find traditional Kyrgyz clothing including coats, hats, boots and felt items.

Overnight at the 4 Ak-Keme Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 3



Bishkek / Lake Issyk-Kul

After breakfast you depart for Lake Issyk-Kul. Travelling east you will first visit the 11th century Burana Tower, a minaret located 70 km from Bishkek, which is all that remains of a former Karakhanid city called Balasgun. Lunch will be with a local family.

Issyk-Kul is Kyrgyzstan's largest lake and surprisingly it never freezes. Surrounded by mountains it still retains its pristine condition. At Cholpan Ata, a town on the north shore of the lake, see the place that is littered with petroglyphs. Said to date from between 500 BC - 100 AD they depict wolves, long-horned ibex, horses, snow leopards and some hunting scenes.

Continue to Bulan Sogottu village where you will *overnight at the 3* Meridian Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 4



Lake Issyk-Kul / Tash Rabat

This morning you will travel to Tash Rabat stopping in Kochkor to visit the felt museum. Lunch will be with a local family.

Continue this afternoon to Tash Rabat. Tash Rabat is located off the main road and is an ancient caravanserai which may have originally been built in the 10th century to protect caravans from both bandits and the weather, although its precise history is still not known. It is located in a beautiful valley with a small river running through it.

There is also the option of staying overnight in Naryn if you do not wish to stay in a yurt at Tash Rabat.

The yurt camp is usually open from 20 May to 30 September.

Overnight in yurt camp or at the Celestial Mountain Guesthouse in Naryn. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 5



Tash Rabat / Kashgar

Today you cross the border from Kyrgyzstan into China bound for Kashgar, fabled trading post of the Silk Road, which you will reach in the late afternoon. The journey takes you across the mighty Tien Shan or Celestial Mountains via the Turugut pass (3,650m).

Kashgar city is the seat of Government and the centre of trade, commerce and industry in South Xinjiang, that is, south of the Tien Shan Mountains. It is comprised of the Kihena Sher or the old city on the bank of Tuman River and Yangi Sher or the new city. Between the two flows Kizil Su or the Red River (also called the Kashgar River) on which can be seen some ruins of Aski Sher or the Ancient city.

East of the plains of Kashgar is the dreaded Taklamakan desert, to the north is the Tien Shan or the Celestial Mountains and to the south and west are located the Kongur and the Muztag Ata ranges of the Pamirs.

Kashgar has been called many different names in its long history, Turan, Mulk-i-Tatar, Kickik Bukhara, Bilad-us-sharq High Tartary, Cathay and Eastern Turkestan.

On arrival check in to the 4 Tianyuan International Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 6

Kashgar

The morning is at leisure.

After lunch begin a tour of Kashgar. Visit the Eidgah Mosque, which is in stark contrast to the Chinese mosques associated with cities like Guangzhou and Xian, and the tombs of Muhammad Kashgari who compiled the Turkic dictionary and Apak Khoja who ruled this area of Xinjiang, including Khotan, Yarkand, Aksu, Kutcha and Tarim, from the 17th to the mid 18th centuries. There is also a huge stone statue of Mao Tse Tung, one of the few that remain anywhere in the country. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant with traditional music.

Overnight at the Tianyuan International Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 7



Kashgar / Turpan (overnight)

Today, Kashgar comes alive with the famous Sunday market. Described by William Dalrymple in his book "In Xanadu" as "A fair and a carnival, a masque and a festival". Kashgar lies at the foot of the Pamirs at the meeting point of the northern and southern Silk Routes.

The Sunday Bazaar comes in two parts - the animal market and the covered market. The former attracts thousands of Uighurs who flock to Kashgar on donkey carts to exchange cereals, vegetables, goats, donkeys, sheep and cattle. This is one of the biggest livestock markets in Asia and provides an opportunity to photograph both the modern and the mediaeval world. Here many minority peoples of Xinjiang can be seen in their colourful dress.

The first part of the morning will be spent wandering amongst the people, produce, animals and food stalls. You then move to the covered market where carpets, pashminas, brassware, inlaid handled knives, silks and spices are for sale.

This afternoon you will be taken to the railway station for the overnight train to Turpan. Train K9788 departs at 15.06.

Overnight on board the train. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 8

Arrive Turpan

The train arrives in Turpan at 13.17. You will be met and transferred to your hotel, the 4* Huozhou Hotel.

The afternoon is at leisure.

This evening go to Grape valley to have dinner in a local restaurant.

Overnight at the 4 Huozhou Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 9



Turpan

Begin your sightseeing programme today. In the town see the Emin Minaret which has intricately designed brick work in an Afghani style. A local ruler, Emin Hoja, built it in 1777. Visit the Karez (wells) that feed underground irrigation channels that lead to the fields and the town from the mountains and from which Turpan owes its existence. Some of these were constructed over 2000 years ago.

You will visit one of two ancient cities in the region, Jiaohe, located just 10 Km from Turpan. It was a small city-state discovered by Zhang Qian during the Han dynasty. Its location, on a raised terrace between two ravines, made it an excellent place to defend.

Overnight at the Huozhou Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 10



Train Turpan / Dunhuang (overnight)

You will travel to three locations today.

Tuyuk village is located 70km from Turpan and inhabited by Uighurs. Albert von Le Coq discovered the ruins of Buddhist cave temples in Tuyuk in 1905, 'clinging like a swallow's nest to the almost perpendicular slope of the mountainside'. The caves date from the 4th century. Over 40 have been carved into the soft dirt and rock surrounding the gully but only a couple can be visited. Enjoy lunch with a Uighur family in the village.



Also see the Flaming Mountains so called for their red appearance in the mid-day sun. On the western side of these mountains are the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves. They consist of a large number of caves that front a river valley and each one contains frescoes of Buddhas some of which were either removed to Berlin by the German Albert von le Coq and were destroyed by Allied bombing in World War II or were defaced by Muslims.

Finally see the Astana tombs. These graves are the remains of the cemetery that served the other major ancient city site in the area, Gaochang.

Return to Turpan later in the day with time to relax. Later this

evening you will be transferred to the railway station for the overnight train to Dunhuang. Train N1086 departs at 23.43.

Overnight on board train (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 11



Arrive Dunhuang

The train arrives in Dunhuang (Liuyuan) at 08.14. On arrival you will be met and taken to the 4* Dunhuang Mountain Resort.

This afternoon you will visit the Mogao Grottoes which are arguably the best examples of Buddhist cave art in the country. The caves, as the story goes, were begun in AD366 by a monk who had a vision of a thousand Buddhas and then carved the first of several hundred caves into the sandstone cliff face. In the 492 grottoes that remain there are over 2000 statues and 45,000 separate murals. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 12

Dunhuang

Today see the Singing Sand Mountains (Mingshan) where the desert meets the oasis at the Crescent Moon Lake. If you wish you can ride a camel and climb the dunes (camel rental not included).

A visit will also be made to the Western 1000 Buddha caves, although in reality there are only 22. The frescoes are similar to the ones found at Mogao and it is therefore mostly assumed that they are also Dunhuang Buddhist art. Their age is unknown but they may pre-date those at the Mogao Grottoes. In addition to the frescoes there are several painted clay statues.

In town see the White Horse Dagoba and the informative Dunhuang County Museum which contains some of the Tibetan and Chinese scriptures found at the famous Mogao grottoes, silks, sacrificial objects and reed torches for the beacon towers.

Overnight at the Dunhuang Mountain Resort. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 13

Dunhuang / Jiayuguan

This morning you will depart for Jiayuguan, a journey of about 5 hours (390km), through the arid Gansu corridor, another opportunity to see some of rural China. You will arrive in time for a late lunch. Snacks will be served on the way. On arrival you will check in to the 3* Garden Hotel.

In the afternoon travel outside the city to see the Overhanging Wall. This section, partly restored and partly un-restored, lies at the base of the Black Mountains. This section is an extended part of the Jiayuguan Pass and was once an important component in the military defence system. A walk along it gives fine views of the surrounding area and its emptiness.

(Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 14

Jiayuguan / Xian

After breakfast visit the magnificently restored fort originally built in 1372. From the ramparts one can see the old wall fading gradually into the desert. Also see the Jiayuguan Museum.

Later in the afternoon you will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Xian (MU2288 15.20-17.20). On arrival you will be met and taken to your hotel.

Overnight at the 4 Mercure Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 15



Xian

The morning is at leisure.

In the afternoon you will be taken to see the Terracotta Warriors. Qin Shihuang was the first emperor of the Chinese people. A mound of earth protects his tomb and it is believed to be studded with precious stones. When Qin Shihuang died, so the story goes, he wanted to be buried along with his entire army and entourage of servants who were of course still alive. He was persuaded instead to create life-like clay figures of them all, the famed Terracotta Warriors, and today they stand with their horses guarding his tomb as they have done for 2000 years.

Returning to Xian see the Large Wild Goose Pagoda that was built in AD648 by the third emperor of the Tang dynasty, Gao Zong, in memory of his deceased mother.

Overnight at the Mercure Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 16



Xian

This morning see the Great Mosque, one of China's largest and built in the Chinese style. Although founded in 742 the present layout dates from the 14th century and is made up of four courtyards which contain stone steles, many trees and ornate arches. It is reached by following several narrow passageways lined with many hawkers and artists. There will be time to walk through the Muslim neighbourhood which is very different from other parts of Han China. Finally, visit the Shaanxi Provincial Museum. This will help you to understand the journey that you have just undertaken and provide you, hopefully, with the information that you may need to fully appreciate your Silk Route journey.

The afternoon is at leisure.

Overnight at the Mercure Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 17



Xian / Beijing

This morning you leave Xian for the flight to Beijing (CA1224 15.30-17.15). On the way you will visit the Han Jing Tomb & Museum.

Discovered in the early 1990's by road workers this tomb has only recently been opened and is still under excavation. The terracotta figurines uncovered here are much less imposing (but no less grand) than those of the Army of Terracotta Warriors. The museum houses most of the artifacts excavated from the tomb which include examples of male & female warriors, eunuchs, dancers and various farm animals. A short drive from the museum you will have the chance to visit the Underground Museum, which is the 1st of its kind and was opened in April 2006. Here you have the chance to walk around the actual burial chambers (which are glassed in to protect



the relics) and possibly observe the excavations of the Miniature Warriors taking place.

In Beijing you will be met and taken to your Hotel. This evening enjoy a traditional Chinese Peking Duck dinner as your final farewell dinner.

Overnight at the 4 Marriott Courtyard Hotel. (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 18

Beijing / London Heathrow

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for the British Airways flight to London Heathrow, arriving in London later the same day. *(Breakfast).*

Steppestravel
travel beyond the ordinary

TRIP PRICE

Price from: £3,915.00 per person
£65.00 per person supplement for exclusive use of train compartment.

The price quoted is based on two people travelling and sharing a twin/double room.

Includes: Return international flights in Economy Class, air passenger taxes where they can be collected as part of the air tickets, accommodation in twin/double or single room (including early check in in Bishkek and late check-out in Turpan), private sightseeing programme with English speaking guide and entrance fees to tourist sites, transfers & transportation (regional flights in Economy Class, 1st Class shared 4 berth Soft sleeper train compartment, air-conditioned car), meals as indicated.

Excludes: Visas, travel insurance, meals unless specified, items of a personal nature, gratuities, camera/video fee, early check in or late check out at hotels unless specified.

Notes: The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, unexpected increases, written confirmation and Steppes Travel's terms and conditions.

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the countries and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities these fascinating countries have to offer.

We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as

hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact Steppes Travel on 01285 880 980 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

YOUR CONSULTANT

Paul Craven

Asia, Country Director

paul@steppestravel.co.uk

Carole Williams

Asia, Sales Support

carole@steppestravel.co.uk

Tel: 01285 651010

Fax: 01285 885888

05/01/2011

steppestravel
travel beyond the ordinary