

**COMPASS
EXPEDITIONS**

Kyrgyzstan Discovered

14 Days

Information Kit

Kyrgyzstan

Offering a landscape of towering snow-capped mountains, lush alpine valleys, glaciers and high-altitude lakes.



COMPASS EXPEDITIONS

Discover the virtually unknown country of Kyrgyzstan, one of the most beautiful countries on earth! The mountain chain, known as the Celestial Mountains, which dominates 90% of the country offers a skyline of 7,000 m peaks, glacier laden valleys and high-altitude lakes. Kyrgyzstan is the ultimate adventurers' destination. It is a nation of incredible untouched natural beauty; of red rock canyons dissected by glacial rivers and some of the finest remote mountain driving in the world. This region featured prominently on the legendary Silk Road Route and the way to the Tash Rabat Caravanserai will include some of the finest scenery you will ever see. Kyrgyzstan is waiting to be discovered and offers a unique opportunity to visit somewhere that hasn't been overrun with tourists.

Itinerary

Day One: Bishkek

Your Bishkek airport transfer will take you directly to our joining hotel, ready for the start tomorrow. Tonight, you will meet your crew for your tour briefing and welcome dinner.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Two: Cholpon Alta

We collect our 4WDs and depart Bishkek stopping enroute to visit the 11th century Burana Tower, all that remains of a once flourishing Silk Road oasis. It's not long before we are in the legendary Krygz scenery as we enter the Chon - Kemin Valley, a region of lush natural beauty and spectacular snow-capped mountains that border Kazakhstan. We eventually reach the second largest alpine lake on earth, the breathtaking Issyk Kol with the Tien Shan mountains that border China as a backdrop.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Three: Karakol

We start the day off with a visit to the wonderful field of petroglyphs at Cholpon Ata, dating back to 1500 BC before driving along the shoreline of Issyk Kol with distant views of the Tien Shan Mountains. We will enjoy a special dirt section as we venture into the Semenov Gorge, a landscape of exceptional beauty with the glacially fed Aksuu River dissecting the gorge. We drive around the eastern edge of the lake where, reputedly, the Black Plague of the 13th century had its origins, before arriving at Karakol, our base for the next three nights.

Hotel Accommodation



Day Four: Karakol

A superb action-packed day today. We explore the striking vibrant red cliffs known as Jeti Oghuz, or seven bulls, it is here we shall witness the disappearing tradition of eagle hunting. Hitting the dirt, we drive through the utterly breathtaking Jeti Oghuz Valley where we shall enjoy a huge traditional feast inside a yurt located on the banks of the glacial silt laden Jeti Oghuz River. It's a magnificent day in the alpine valleys of Kyrgyzstan.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Five: Karakol

Today we are amongst 7,000 m / 23,000 ft snow-capped giants that border China. Our destination today is the rarely visited Chong Ashuu Pass, one of the highest mountain roads tracks in Kyrgyzstan at over 4,000 m / 13,000 ft. We return to Karakol via the superb Sary Jaz Valley and the abandoned former Russian village of Enilchek with its completely wild hot springs.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Six: Naryn

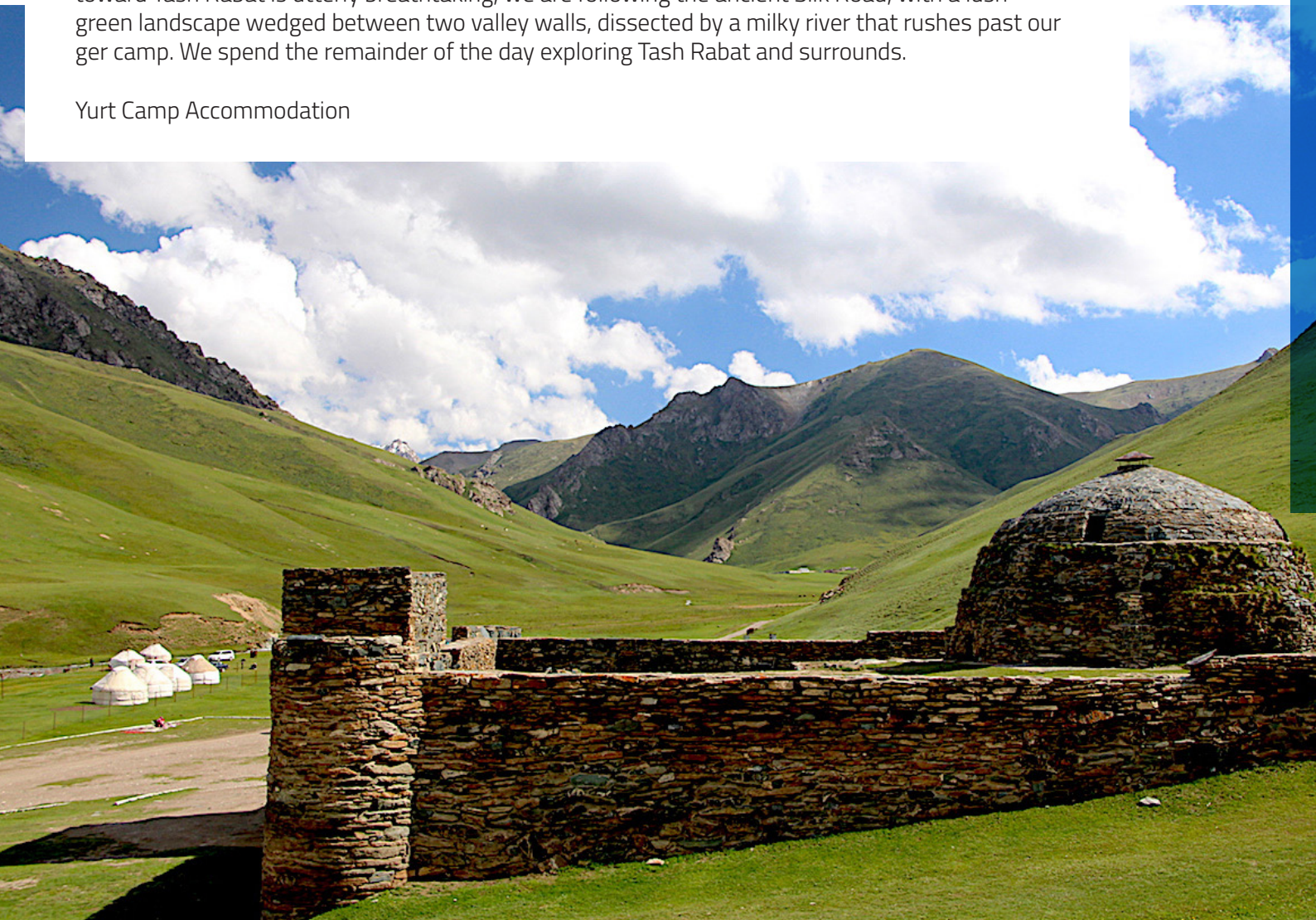
Leaving Karakol we drive west along the southern shoreline of Isskyl Kol with the Tien Shan and Chinese border in the close distance. It's more of a transit day today but the scenery remains breathtaking. We shall overnight in Naryn, a former stop on the ancient Silk Road and surrounded by majestic mountains all around.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Seven: Tash Rabat

A shorter drive today with a mix of paved and dirt tracks as we venture south to one of the finest remaining examples of Silk Road history. The Tash Rabat Caravanserai was built in the 15th Century and served as a rest stop for weary traders of the Silk Road. Driving the narrow valley toward Tash Rabat is utterly breathtaking, we are following the ancient Silk Road, with a lush green landscape wedged between two valley walls, dissected by a milky river that rushes past our ger camp. We spend the remainder of the day exploring Tash Rabat and surrounds.

Yurt Camp Accommodation





Day Eight: Song Kol

Departing Tash Rabat, we ascend several mighty 3,000 m / 10,000 ft passes offering epic views of the mountainous terrain of Kyrgyzstan. The Moldo Ashuu (pass) is a thrilling drive via seemingly endless switchbacks. We reach a lofty plateau where we drive onto the wonderful Song Kol (lake), a magnificent lake bordered by yurts where nomadic families fatten their stock during the brief summer months.

Yurt Camp Accommodation

Day Nine: Kazarman

We descend the plateau and again cross numerous lofty mountain passes with extraordinarily scenic valleys in between. We reach the remote mining town of Kazarman, that's closed off to the outside for most of the year due to all access passes being snowbound, late afternoon and enjoy our first homestay. Our gracious hosts provide an amazing home cooked meal for us.

Homestay Accommodation

Day Ten: Arslanbob

We descend into the Ferghana Valley today via the wonderful Kazarman Pass. Our drive will soon ascend again to our next destination of Arslanbob, famous for the last remaining old walnut groves in the world, spectacularly set under the impressive Babash Ata Mountain Range. Arslanbob is a unique village in Kyrgyzstan because of its mostly Uzbek population. We enjoy our 2nd homestay, staying with an Uzbek family as part of a community initiative to create income for these people, tonight offers a wonderful insight into the Uzbek way of life.

Homestay Accommodation

Day Eleven: Sary Chelek

After a tour of the ancient walnut grove, we descend once again to the Ferghana Valley we cross briefly into Uzbekistan, there are no borders or checkpoints. We spend most of today on the main highway through an endlessly changing landscape of canyons and mountains. Turning off the highway we reach the UNESCO listed biosphere reserve of Sary Chelek.

Hotel Accommodation

Day Twelve: Sary Chelek

We spend today in the reserve often claimed as the most beautiful in all of Kyrgyzstan. Sary Chelek is a series of lakes surrounded by the steep sided Chatkal Range; its slopes are covered in forest. We will take a boat out onto the Sary Chelek Lake affording us epic views of the 4,000 m / 6,400 ft mountains that tower above the lake, it's breathtaking stuff.

Guesthouse Accommodation

Day Thirteen: Chyckkan Gorge

We make our way from Arkit through an epic landscape, and into an incredibly barren landscape that winds and twists its way to Toktogul. We get wonderful views of the incredible azure-coloured waters of Toktogul Reservoir before arriving at the wonderful Chyckkan Gorge where we spend a night at a lodge with a remarkable balcony that hangs out over the raging Chyckkan River, just below!

Hotel Accommodation

Day Fourteen: Bishkek

Continuing north we cross our last significant pass of the trip, the 3,500 m / 11,500 ft Too Ashuu (Pass) before descending into the capital of Bishkek. We will enjoy our final dinner where we can reminisce on what has been an extraordinary 4WD adventure to a remote part of the world rarely visited by the tourist hordes.

Hotel Accommodation

Departure Day: Bishkek

Spend some time in Bishkek or fly home, the choice is yours.

Tour Highlights

- **Issyk Kul and breathtaking alpine valleys**
 - Under the shadow of the towering Tien Shan mountains Issyk Kul is the second largest mountain lake in the world. The alpine valleys that tumble down from the Tien Shans are breathtaking, including the incomparable Jeti Oghuz Valley
- **Tash Rabat Caravanserai** – An amazing, 15th Century, rest stop on the legendary Silk Road. In this spectacular remote part of Central Asia, it's not hard to imagine traders travelling the Silk Road and resting at Tash Rabat
- **Song Kol** – A stunning high-altitude lake surrounded by rolling grasslands dotted with the yurt camps of the nomadic Kyrgyz.
- **Homestays at Kazarman & Arslanbob** – Our effervescent host Baktygul gives a unique insight into what life is like in the remote mountain village of Kazarman and our Uzbek hosts share their home with us as part of a community project in the Uzbek enclave of Arslanbob.
- **Stunning Sary Chelek** – Declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve the magnificent Sary Chelek, one of seven lakes in the reserve, stands surrounded by forest and wild walnut tree clad mountains.





Kyrgyzstan Discovered Information Kit



Tour Details

Drive Profile

We have created a drive grading system for each tour we do, this gives those wishing to participate in this tour as a self-driver, some more insight into what driving conditions might be expected during the tour. Please note that this is a guide only and conditions are constantly changing, new roads are built, and older roads fall apart, and dirt roads can change by the week.

The Kyrgyzstan Discovered tour is a **Grade 4** tour – Half this tour is on dirt the other half is on pavement. The dirt tracks cross a number high altitude passes via an exciting series of switchbacks, some of which have loose gravel. These high mountain passes have limited guard rails and are one vehicle wide in sections. We may cross a small number of very shallow creeks and numerous washouts. The paved roads are generally in good condition and mostly devoid of traffic other than the Bishkek – Osh road and some areas around Issyk Kol.

55% of this tour is on pavement.

45% of this tour is on dirt.

The total distance is approximately 2,500 km / 1,560 mi.

Driver Requirements

If you have chosen the self-drive option, you should be familiar with driving a manual vehicle and being comfortable with driving off road however it is important to note that we won't be forwarding raging rivers or climbing cliff faces and your crew are on hand to assist should the need arise. Additionally, if you have chosen the self-drive option, you are only permitted to have family & friends travel in your vehicle, we won't be putting other guests in your rental vehicle.

All drivers must have a valid driver's license and at least two years driving experience.

Weather

It's summer in Kyrgyzstan, the only time a lot of passes are open. In the mountains (much of the trip) expect temperatures in the mid to high 20's° C / 70's° F during the day, but will drop considerably once the sun sets. Around Lake Karakol and the Ferghana Valley it can be very hot, up to 35° C / 95° F during the day and cooling to a pleasant 18° C / 64° F in the evenings. Little to no rain should be expected, but of course this can change quickly in the mountains.

Accommodation

Our joining and tour end hotel in Bishkek is the 4-star B Hotel. Two nights of the tour will be spent in yurt camps. These yurts have log fires inside with hot water showers and composting toilets that are in a separate building. We stay in the best available hotels in Naryn and Osh, while experiencing some wonderful hospitality in homestays in remote Kazarman and Arslanbob.

Accommodation: 14 nights



Drive Grade: 4



Drive Distance:
2,500 km / 1,560 mi



Sealed / Dirt:
55% / 45%

Tour Inclusions

- Airport Transfers
- 4WD rental, if self drive option has been requested
- Fuel & Tolls, if self drive option has been selected
- Services of Compass Expeditions leader and support staff
- Pre-departure material
- Access to Compass Expeditions App, chock full of tour information, route maps and what to expect.
- Access to satellite phone, pay per minute
- Compass Expeditions tour shirt
- Entrances to all attractions and excursions mentioned in the itinerary
- Restricted border area permits

Meals

Breakfasts - mostly consist of eggs, yoghurts, breads, jams, teas, and coffees.

Lunches - On most occasions we prepare our own picnic lunches that will include salads, vegetables, tuna, processed meats, and fruit (depending on availability). These lunches are prepared on the spot, not prepacked.

Dinners - A variety of western foods are available in the capital Bishkek. Our homestay hosts provide superb local rice dishes, known as Plov, with either meat or veges along with a dizzying array of fruits, deserts and breads. While our yurt camp hosts provide either meat or fish dinners supplemented by local fruit and vegetables.

Breakfasts: 14

Lunches: 12

Dinners: 12

Airport transfers

We include a private airport transfer to and from your joining hotel.

Your Tour Leader

Our tour leaders are the face of Compass Expedition and are often what turns a good experience into a great experience. On all Compass tours we use Compass employees, not handballed off to local operators. We do however utilise a local operator / fixer to assist in the day to day running of the tour.

The Travel App

Once a booking has been made you will receive access to our Compass Expeditions Travel App. This App is loaded with details regarding your tour, from daily drive descriptions, maps, accommodation info, tips of what there is to see, handy hints and more. The details of this App are sent to you 30 days before departure ensuring the most up to date information is included.



Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. The price you see at booking is set in stone.

Is this tour right for me?

- » This tour travels through some remote areas where modern day facilities and conveniences are scarce.
- » Two nights on tour are spent in yurts, where there is shared toilet and shower facilities. The showers will be hot, and toilets are eco-friendly composting type.
- » We will spend two nights at homestays, these are the very houses that our hosts live in, but are certainly more basic than what we may be accustomed to. These houses are clean and hygienic, simply more spartan.
- » We briefly spend time at altitudes of over 3,500 m / 11,500 ft as we cross passes, we also spend some nights at around 2,000 m / 6,500 ft.
- » Some days a considerable time is spent travelling in the 4WD's over rough terrain at slow speeds.
- » Our 4WDs are higher milage vehicles that may look a little worn, these vehicles are safe and in a roadworthy condition but spend their life on the rough mountain passes and valleys, not having the very latest Landcruiser 300 series is a trade-off for visiting these remote regions.
- » This tour is family friendly; the locals love the kids!

Tour Exclusions

- International Flights
- Visas (if required)
- Personal Health / Travel Insurance
- Tips & gratuities

Travel insurance

It is compulsory to have travel insurance to tour with us. It just makes sense! Accidents happen, luggage is lost and tour or flight cancellations can occur, so all participants on Compass Expeditions tours must have an appropriate level of travel insurance to cover the unforeseen. You must satisfy yourself that your policy covers medical emergencies resulting from any and all of the activities you propose to undertake during the course of the tour.

Passport

Your passport will need to be valid for at least six months AFTER completion of your tour. Your passport should have at least one full page available, for each country you will be visiting on this trip.

Visas

Kyrgyzstan has one of the most relaxed visa requirement regimes in Central Asia. Visas are not required for many nationalities, including, but not limited to, Australia, NZ, US, UK & Canada.

If a visa is required for your nationality, then it is your responsibility to ensure that you have all necessary visas for your travels. Compass Expeditions will assist by providing documents required for your visa application.

Vaccinations

We highly recommend that you speak with your doctor or travel specialist clinic to obtain the latest information on any vaccinations you may require, prior to departure.





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What's to love about this trip?

Most people can't spell this country let alone ever considered travelling here. Kyrgyzstan must be one of the least visited yet most stunning mountainous countries on earth and no one explores it like Compass Expeditions does. With over 75% of the country at an elevation of over 1,700 m / 5,600 ft Kyrgyzstan is a mountain scenery overload and being on the legendary Silk Road offers a rare insight to what it might have been like when traders peddled their goods between China and the west all those centuries ago.

- » You will love the opportunity to drive through an epic landscape of towering snow-capped peaks, alpine valleys, and high-altitude lakes.
- » You will love the stunning remnants of old Silk Road stops such as Burana Tower and Tash Rabat
- » You will love the jaw dropping scenery of the undeveloped alpine valleys dotted with the occasional yurt, always located beside impossible scenic rivers.
- » You will love witnessing the ancient tradition of eagle hunting.
- » You will love the effervescent hosts at our homestays in the super remote Kyrgyzstan countryside.





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You've made a booking, what next?

Once a booking has been made, you will receive an automated booking confirmation. Soon after, you will receive a "welcome" email, with a link to our comprehensive pre departure booklet. This booklet will prepare you for your adventure and has more details on what to bring and what to expect. We email login details for our travel app 30 days before departure; the app is full of information, including historical and country information. The more you read, the more you will get out of your trip.

Of course we are also available anytime prior to your tour if you require further information or assistance.

Thanks for spending your time reading this information kit. We hope it has inspired you to challenge yourself, if not traveling with us, then just enjoying this remarkable world that we live in.

the
adventuretraveller
take the road best travelled

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