

The 4 'stans' of Central Asia

17Sept – 06Oct 2017
(Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan & Kazakhstan)



If you're looking for something off-path in all ways literal and figurative, Central Asia makes a good travel candidate. Filled with incredible mountain landscapes, deserts, Silk Road cities, friendly people and quirky experiences of the Soviet hangover variety, Central Asia is hard to beat when it comes to raw, discover-the-world potential. To this day, it remains one of travellers' favourites and most fulfilling travel experiences of one of the world's greatest road trips.

This is Central Asia. The 'Stans'. Never well understood, but absolutely worth an attempt to understand. Come, embark on this journey of discovering the 4 stunning 'stans' of Central Asia with us this **17Sept to 06Oct 2017**.



Flights Schedule: Air Astana KC

17SEP KUL TSE KC 936/991 1055 2030 (for those who opt for pre-trip extension to Astana)
19SEP KUL ALA KC 936 1055 1655
05OCT TASALA KC 128 1420 1650
05OCT ALAKUL KC 935 2330 0940 # 06Oct

Itinerary

17SEP DAY 01 KUALA LUMPUR – ASTANA @ 2030 (pre-trip extension)

Arrive Astana airport @ 2030. Meet and greet and transfer to Hotel to check in.

Welcome to **Astana, capital city of Kazakhstan**, one of the strangest capital cities on earth. The flashy buildings of Astana rise up implausibly from the flat plains of oil-rich Kazakhstan to form a city stuck between a Soviet past and an aspirational present.

Overnite in Astana

18SEP DAY 02 ASTANA (B/L/D) (pre-trip extension)

After breakfast, we shall start our sightseeing in this capital of Kazakhstan. Visit “Old center” – Akmolinsk town of merchants with the Millennium Axis line named by Kisho Kurokawa, chief architect and creator of Astana general layout.

Next on our list is the **Astana Opera** building, the Round Square with numerous fountains. Continue to Nurzhol and Green Water boulevards with skyscrapers of exceptional architectural forms.

After lunch, spend some time to visit the **Khan-Shatyr** shopping center, which is the world’s largest marquee.

Just by sun-set time, at the top of Astana - **Bayterek tower**, enjoy breath-taking panoramic view on the city in between the setting sun and the lighting of buildings of the city.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnite in Astana.





19SEP DAY 03 ASTANA – ALMATY (B/L/D) pre-trip extension

After breakfast, drive to the **EXPO 2017** site for a view from outside.

Thereafter, we shall continue our exploration of Astana City by a visit to the **Assumption Russian Orthodox Cathedral**, photo-stop of Nur Astana Mosque, Astana’s Presidential Palace & Palace of Peace & Reconciliation.

Lunch at local restaurant .

In the late evening, after an early dinner, transfer to the Train Station to take the Kazakhstan Fast Train to Almaty : *The Tulpar – Talgo Train ETD 18:53 ETA 0750 (the next morning)*

Overnite on board the Fast Train from Astana to Almaty (with 2 persons in a Cabin – subject to availability)
If 2 to a Cabin is not available, will book on 4 persons to a Cabin and refund each the differential.

19 Sep Main Tour Day 01 Kuala Lumpur – Almaty (D) – for those not taking the pre-trip extension to Astana

Depart KLIA @ 1055 for Almaty on Air Astana. ETA 1650

Arrive **Almaty** , meet and greet with our local guide. Transfer to a local restaurant for dinner.

Check into Almaty Hotel and have a good rest.

Overnite in Almaty



20 SEP DAY 04 ALMATY (B/L/D)

For those with pre-trip extension to Astana shall arrive at Almaty station @7.50am

Meet and greet by our local guide and transfer to breakfast and to meet up with the rest of the group at our Almaty hotel.

For those not having a pre-trip extension to Astana, will have a late breakfast while waiting for those from the pre-trip extension to meet up at the hotel.

Today our Almaty tour include

- a) a fun walk along Zhibek Zholy
- b) **Green Bazaar**
- c) **ZenKov Cathedral** & Panfilov Park & Memorial Complex
- d) photo-stop @ Central Moslem Mosque & Independence Sq
- e) Kok-Tube hill – Kok Tube park
- f) **Falcon Farm**

Overnight in Almaty



21SEPT DAY 05 ALMATY – CHARYN CANYON – KARAKOL (B/L/D)

After an early breakfast, drive to visit **Charyn Canyon** along the Almaty-Kegen highway...Walking along the safe path to the bottom of the canyon, explore the Castles Valley and perhaps having our picnic lunch on the bank of the Charyn river.

Drive to **Kegen Border** via Santash Barrow (counted stones).

Cross the * border Karkara-Kegen which operates from May till October every year from 0900am till 1800pm. Cross 1000m neutral zone (transportation may not be available) and drive to Karakol via the Karkara valley.

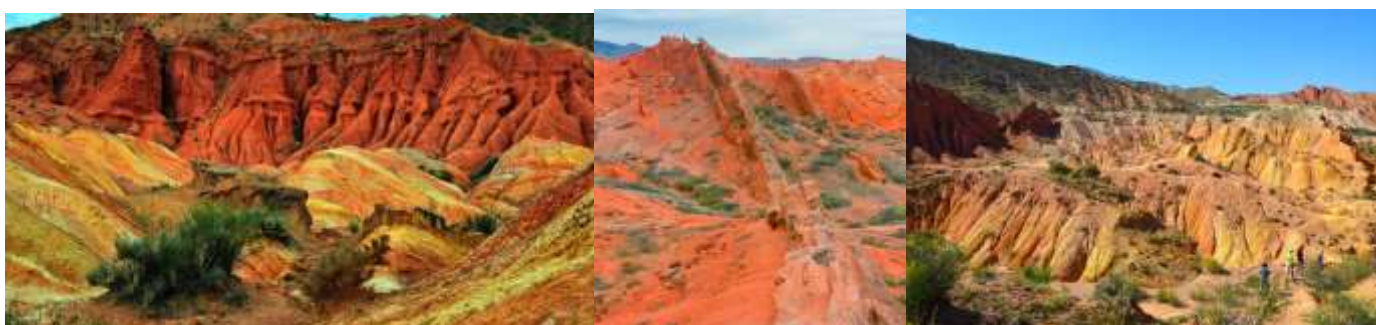
Overnight in Karakol Farm.





22SEPT DAY 06 KARAKOL – JETY OGUZ (B/L/D)

After breakfast, visit the Orthodox Church, Dungun Mosque & Museum of M.V. Prejvalsky.
 After lunch, drive to visit **Jety Oguz Gorge** - at the altitude of 2200m above sea level is one of most picturesque of Kyrgyzstan. Here, one can view the “**Seven bulls**”. The name is symbolic, because there is a 35km long wall of seven huge red-brown cliffs resembling ranked furious bulls standing together. Jety-Oguz is also famous for tis hot spring with water enriched with radon and hydrogen sulphide.
 Dinner and overnight in a Yurt Camp with good toilet & shower facilities.
 (Each Yurt may accommodate 4 adults)



23SEPT DAY 07 JETY OGUZ – Tamga – CHON KEMIN (B/L/D)

After breakfast, transfer to Tamga, on the way visit the **Skazka Gorge**. One of the best views of **Issyk-Kul Lake** is guaranteed.
 Lunch in Tamga.
 Continue the journey to **Chon-Kemin** and en-route to visit a felt carpet workshop at Bokonbaevo.
 During the dinner you will test the traditional Kyrgyz meal Besh-Parmak.
 Overnight stay in a family guesthouse.



24SEPT DAY 08 CHON KEMIN (170km) – BISHKEK – Tashkent B/L/D)

After breakfast, transfer to **Bishkek**. On the way, visit **Burana Tower** and an open air museum of Balbals (stone warriors). Visit ruins of the ancient town Ak-Beshim.
Lunch in the family nearby Burana Tower.

Continue the journey to Bishkek which is the capital city of KYRGYZSTAN.

Visit the oriental market **OSH bazaar** if time permit visit Oak Park, Ala-Too Sq. Status of Manas & Philharmonic Hall before transferring to the airport to catch the flight on Altyn Air* ETD 1920 (1hr 15min)

Arriving **TASHKENT** 2000 (Tashkent time zone is one hour behind Bishkek) to overnight.
Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan, home of 2.2 million.





25SEPT DAY 09 TASHKENT - (B/L/D)

After breakfast, start the **Tashkent city** sightseeing tour. Visit Independent Sq, Amir Temur Sq, Museum of History of Uzbekistan.

After lunch continue the tour to the **OLD city of Tashkent** with Khast-Imam complex. In Khast-Imam visit Madrasah of Barak-Khan, Tillya-Sheykh Mosque, Mausoleum of the Saint Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi and the Islamic Institute of Iman al-Bukhari.

Explore **Chorsu Bazaar**.

Overnight in Tashkent.

26SEP DAY 10 TASHKENT – SAMARKAND (B/L/D)

Early breakfast and transfer to the Train Station to catch the speed train “**Afrosiab**” 0800.

Arrive **Samarkand** 1030.

Visit Afasiab Museum and the Tomb of Saint Daniel. Drive to **Konigil village** to explore the traditional way of making Samarkand paper from mulberry.

Samarkand is known for maintaining and occasionally reviving its centuries-old traditions. Mulberry paper making that is popularly known as “Silk paper” in Central Asia was a tradition of Samarkand for hundreds of year ago before this tradition was buried under the dust of industrialisation in former USSR. Samarkand used to produce best mulberry paper in Silk Road countries— that is considered the birthplace of papermaking.

Overnight in Samarkand





27SEPT DAY 11 SAMARKAND (B/L/D)

Samarkand is **one of the oldest cities in the world**, an age mate of Rome, Athens and Babylon. For 25 centuries of its existence the city went through many great and dramatic events. Samarkand saw Ska and Massaget, Greek and Macedonian, Karakitai, Arab and Genghis Khan conquests. During the reign of Tamerlane, Samarlane became the capital of its vast empire.

Visit spectacular Registan Square, remains of Bibi Khanum Mosque, Siyob Bazaar, Ulugbek Observatory, Shakhi-Zinda Necropolis and Gur Emir Mausoleum, authentic shrine of Tamerlane.

Overnight in Samarkand

28SEPT DAY 12 SAMARKAND – GUJDUVAN - BUKHARA (B/L/D)

Drive to **Bukhara** at 08:00 (lunch on the way in local café), one of the Silk Road cities.

13:00 Stop on the way at Rabati-Malik Caravanserai and visit Gijduvan ceramics museum. Continue driving to Bukhara.

17:00 Arrive in Bukhara, check in to the hotel. Dinner with national show at Nodir Devan Begi Madrassah
Overnight in Bukhara .

Holy Bukhara is the name of this famous city called respectfully by the Uzbek. An ancient legend runs; the blessed light is descending to all Muslim cities and is it only Bukhara where it is ascending to the sky. The city is called “ The Support of Islam” and it is not without reason.





29SEPT DAY 13 BUKHARA (B/L/D)

Breakfast at the hotel.

Bukhara is one of the most ancient cities of Central Asia. An old legend says that blessed light descends from heaven to all the Muslim cities, but only through Bukhara does this light go back up. The city occupies a favourable geographic position on the crossroads of the caravan roads leading to Afghanistan, Persia, India and Russia. A rich trading city and former capital of the Samanid state and Uzbek dynasties, Bukhara had become the very place where authentic masterpieces of Muslim architecture including numerous mausoleums, mosques and madrassahs were erected. Today, more than 150 architectural monuments are located in Bukhara, and trace the development of arts and crafts in Central Asia.

Spend our morning in fascinating Old Bukhara which is listed by **UNESCO** as a World Heritage Site. Explore Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque and Miri-Arab Madrasah, Magoki-Attori Mosque, madrassahs of Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan, trade domes, Lyabi Hauz Ensemble, Chor-Minor Madrasah.

Probably the most famous of all Central Asian minarets built in the 12th century, the **Kalyan minaret** in the center of Bukhara is a work of art whose influence has spread far and wide. Copied by an Italian trader of the time, the diamond pattern in the brickwork on the exterior of the Kalyan minaret ended up later on the walls of the Doge's Palace in Venice.

Continue our Bukhara tour, to discover **Ark Fortress**, Bolo-Khauz Mosque, Samani dynasty and Chashma-Ayub mausoleums.

Then visit Sitorai-Mokhikhosa, the summer residence of Bukhara's last emir and a unique site that combines Oriental and Russian architecture. Continue to Mausoleum of Bakhoutdin Naqshbandi.

Overnight in Bukhara.



30SEPT DAY 14 BUKHARA – FARAB BORDER – Merv - MARY (B/L/D)

In the morning transfer to Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan **border point Alat-Farab** (100 km, 1 h. 30 min.). Go through border formalities on both checkpoints. Cross 1.5 km neutral zone (transportation may not be available). Meet your Turkmenistan guide and drive to Merv through Turkmenabat (240 km, 5 h.).

Merv was a major center of international trade and crafts located on the **Silk Road**. Discover historical park with Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum, Large and Small Gyz Gala, Erk Gala, Gyaur Gala, Keshk Fortress, and others. Today Merv is entered into the list of the World Legacy of **UNESCO** as a well-preserved ancient center of the Great Silk Road.

Late evening, drive to Mary to overnight

Overnight in Mary.



01OCT DAY 15 MARY – ASHGABAT (B/L/D)

Early morning flight to Ashgabat (ETD 0755h, ETA 0835h).

Situated between the Karakum Desert and the Kopet Dag mountain, **Ashgabat** is the capital & largest city of Turkmenistan. With its lavish marble palaces, gleaming gold domes and vast expanses of manicured parkland, Ashgabat (“the city of love” in Arabic) has reinvented itself as a showcase city for the newly independent republic and is definitely **one of the Central Asia’s**, if not the world’s – **strangest places**.

City tour, with visits of Sunday bazaar (aka Tolkuchka), Ertogrul Gazy Mosque, Independence Park, Neutrality Arch, Nissa (UNESCO), National Museum and Turkmenbashi Mosque-Mausoleum. After dinner city-by-night tour (40 min) on the way to hotel.

Overnight in Ashgabat

02OCT DAY 16 ASHGABAT – DARWAZA (B/L/D)

After breakfast, we will begin our long drive (approx.. 4 hours) to **Darwaza by 4x4 Jeep Car**, passing through the **Karakum desert**.

We will make a stopover at the Akhalteke horse stables.

Upon arriving Darwaza, we will view the burning crater by the day then drive to our camp ground to set up our camp, enjoy our camp dinner & **setting sun over the desert**.

After dinner, we shall return to view the burning gas crater by the night.

Overnight in Darwaza Tent accommodation. **NOTE:** *the tent accommodation is without bathroom facilities, only with Bio-Toilet specially arranged to be shared by our group. We are choosing to over night here for a different travel experience and also because the distance to another town is a distance to drive to. . And at the same time to have the golden opportunity to enjoy the setting sun and rising sun over the desert & crater.*

Darwaza is the home of the Gas Crater (known as the Hell’s Gate to the locals), is one of the most enigmatic sights of Turkmenistan .



03OCT Day 17 DARWAZA – Kunya Urgench - Dashoguz - KHIVA (B/L/D)

Drive to Dashoguz. Visit **Kunya Urgench** (listed in the **UNESCO World Heritage**).

Kunya-Urgench is situated in north-western Turkmenistan, on the left bank of the Amu Daria River. Urgench was the capital of the Khorezm region, part of the Achaemenid Empire. The old town contains a series of monuments mainly from the 11th to 16th centuries, including a mosque, the gates of a caravanserai, fortresses, mausoleums and a 60-m high minaret. The monuments testify to outstanding achievements in architecture and craftsmanship whose influence reached Iran and Afghanistan, and later the architecture of the Mogul Empire of 16th-century India.

Drive back to **Dashoguz** for lunch. After lunch transfer to the border post, **border crossing** around 1600h.

Go through the border formalities on both checkpoints. Here again, we need to cross the 1km neutral zone (transportation may not be available.) Meet with our local Uzbekistan local guide and drive to Khiva. Upon arriving **Khiva**, dinner and check into hotel and have a good rest.



04Oct Day 18 KHIVA – Urgench – Tashkent (B/L/D)

After breakfast, **City tour of Khiva**, one of the old cities of ancient Khorezm, the pearl of eastern middle age architecture, a world heritage & once upon a trading post on Silk Road.

Visit the Architectural complex Ichan Kala – Kunya Ark – The Khan’s fortress – the Kalta Minor Tower.

The Mukhammad Amin Khan – The Juma Mosque – The Tash Khavli – The Ak Mosque- The Pakhlavan Makhmud & The Islom Khodja Residence

Transfer to **Urgench** to catch a night flight back to Tashkent.

Check into Tashkent Hotel .



05Oct Day 19 TASHKENT – KUALA LUMPUR via Almaty (B/-/- MOB)

Breakfast at the hotel. Free and easy on pax’s own leisure to wonder around the area near to the hotel. By 11am check out and transfer to the airport for our departure flight back to Kuala Lumpur via Almaty. Lunch at the airport on your own.

06Oct Day 20 Arriving Kuala Lumpur @ 0940 (MOB)

The end of the tour

The flow of the itinerary may vary, subjected to local conditions at the time of visit. There are some days with long distance drive, long delay while crossing the border due to local restrictions and custom formalities. During days where we are visiting monument , place of worship, “proper” attire is required.

The 4 'stans' of Central Asia

17Sept – 06Oct 2017

(Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan & Kazakhstan)

Visa Requirements for Malaysian passport holder

- a) Kazakhstan : Free Visa on Arrival
- b) Kyrgyzstan : Free Visa on Arrival
- c) Uzbekistan : Visa required for those below 55 years old – pre apply in Malaysia (Visa fee TBA)
- d) Turkmenistan : Visa required – may obtain at the border or pre-apply in Malaysia (Visa fee TBA)

Costing Details

1) Main Tour

Without pre – trip extension to Astana (Day 01/02/part of 03 of the Full Itinerary)

Main Group size between 12 – 16 paxs

18 Days/16 Nights Tour Price	Tour Fare	Twin-sharing	@MYR 13,390.00
International Air Ticket	KUL-ALMATY//TAS-KUL		@MYR 3,500.00

			MYR 16,890.00 per person

Single Suppl @MYR 2000.00

2) Pre-Trip extension to Astana + Main Tour

With Astana City (Day 01 / 02 / 03 of the Full Itinerary)

Pre-Trip Extension Group size between 08 – 14paxs*

20 Days / 18 Nights Tour Price	Twin-sharing	@MYR 15,788.00	
International Air Ticket	KUL-TSE(ASTANA)//TAS-KUL	@MYR 3,995.00	

			MYR 19,783.00 per person

Single Suppl @MYR 2400.00

Pre-Trip Extension Group size between 15 – 16paxs*

20 Days / 18 Nights Tour Price	Twin-sharing	@MYR 15,388.00	
International Air Ticket	KUL-TSE(Astana)//TAS-KUL	@MYR 3,995.00	

			MYR 19,383.00 per person

Single Suppl @MYR 2400.00

***cost of pre-trip extension depends on how many tour members opt to do the pre-trip extension .**

For pre-trip extension - min. 8 paxs / max 16 paxs

For Main Tour – min 12 paxs / max 16 paxs

Air ticket prices are subjected to change .

Tour price included Travel Insurance Ex-KUL (Worldwide Area 2 by AXA). For those who already have their own travel insurance valid policy, may deduct MYR 113.00 from the Tour Price in due course.

Tour Price in MYR per person of the following accommodation :**

Astana (Kazakhstan) – Kazhol Hotel 4* or similar

Almaty (Kazakhstan) – Otrar Hotel 3* or similar

Karakol (Kyrgyzstan) - Amir Hotel or Green Yard Guesthouse or similar

Jety-Oguz (Kyrgyzstan)– Yurt Camp with shared clean washroom facilities

Chon-Kemin (Kyrgyzstan)– Family house / home stay

Tashkent (Uzbekistan) - Shodlik Palace Hotel 3* or similar

Samarkand (Uzbekistan) - Diyora Hotel 4* or similar

Bukhara (Uzbekistan) - Malika Hotel 4* or similar

Mary (Turkmenistan) - Mary 4* or similar

Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) - Yildyz 5* or similar

Darwaza (Turkmenistan) - Tent with shared Bio-toilet

Khiva (Uzbekistan) - Orient Star Hotel 3* or similar

Currency Exchange Rate used : 1USD : 4.5MYR

**** Tour Price may be subjected to change due to changes in exchange rate and we reserve the right to charge accordingly the differential if any.**

Uzbekistan Part included

- 1. All private transfer in a 20 seater coach**
- 2. Hotel accommodation 8 nights with daily breakfast**
- 3. Escort English Speaking guide during the tour**
- 4. Full Board meals as per itinerary**
- 5. Train Ticket from Tashkent – Samarkand (Aforisab Fast Train – Economy class)**
- 6. Domestic air-ticket from Urgench – Tashkent**
- 7. National Show in Bukhara**
- 8. Entrance tickets to the monuments in the itinerary**
- 9. Mineral water 1 L per person per day**
- 10. Tipping to local guide & driver**

Uzbekistan Part do not included

- 1. Visa Fee**
- 2. Porter fee**
- 3. Photo & video fees if any**
- 4. Other services not mentioned above.**

Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan part included

- 1. All private transfer in a 18 seater mini bus**
- 2. Accommodation in the mentioned hotels with daily breakfast.**
- 3. Entrance fees to sites as per itinerary**
- 4. English Speaking guide during the tour**
- 5. Full Board meals as per itinerary**
- 6. Ecological fee**
- 7. For pre-trip extension to Astana – the Fast night train ticket ~2 persons to a Cabin**
- 8. Domestic air-ticket from Bishkek – Tashkent by Altyn Air**
- 9. Mineral water 1 L per person per day**
- 10. Tipping to local guide & driver**

Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan do not part included

- 1. Visa Fee if any**
- 2. Porter fee**
- 3. Photo & video fees if any**
- 4. Other services not mentioned above.**

Turkmenistan Part included

1. Letter of Invitation for the Visa application
2. Accommodation as per itinerary with daily breakfast
3. Entrance fees to sites as per itinerary
4. English Speaking guide during the tour
5. Full Board meals as per itinerary
6. Transport services
44 seater coach + 4 no 4x4 wheel for 12pax
44 seater coach + 5 no 4x4 wheel for 16 pax
7. Domestic air-ticket from Mary – Ashgabat
8. Mineral water 1 L per person per day
9. Tipping to local guide & driver
10. Tea, coffee for the long distance journey.

Turkmenistan Part do not included

1. Visa Fee & Border fee
2. Porters fee / photo& video fee
3. Tea drinking in local house like national crumpest, dried fruits, sweets, fruits etc
4. Any service not mentioned above.

Itinerary may be subjected to change according to local conditions at the time of visit.

Weather forecast : between 10 C to 28 C subject to change (Autumn season)

Deposit payment : MYR 5,000.00 per person upon booking

**Payment : 2nd Payment by end of May (MYR5,000.00)
Final Payment by end of July**

Booking : laura@elsoltravel.com



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