



**The Pamir Highway: From the Tien Shan  
to the High Pamirs  
2020**



## **The Pamir Highway: From the Tien Shan to the High Pamirs The Silk Road Less Traveled from Kyrgyzstan to Tajikistan**

**One Departure in 2020 – Explorer Series – 18 Days**

**July 13-30, 2020**

*Join a fascinating and adventurous journey through two of the most remote and rarely explored countries in Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Begin in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, then drive out into the rolling countryside to explore the region’s high altitude lakes and spectacular snow-capped peaks. Visit with families in their traditional yurts to get a feel for the nomadic way of life, attending demonstrations of cooking, felt-making, and yurt-building, and discovering thrilling ancient horse games such as kok-boru, the Kyrgyz variant of polo. Cross into Tajikistan, and set off on a breathtaking overland route through jagged mountains and plunging valleys along one of the world’s most scenic drives, the Pamir Highway. Experience the majestic and hauntingly beautiful landscape of the Wakhan Corridor, where Silk Road merchants and “Great Game” players used to tread, and enjoy conversations and home-cooked meals with local Tajiks in their timeless mountain villages before descending down into the lively capital, Dushanbe.*



## Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Monday, July 13	Arrive Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Day 2, Tuesday, July 14	Bishkek
Day 3, Wednesday, July 15	Bishkek • Chon-Kemin
Day 4, Thursday, July 16	Chon-Kemin • Son Kul
Day 5, Friday, July 17	Son Kul • Naryn
Day 6, Saturday, July 18	Naryn • day trip to Tash Rabat
Day 7, Sunday, July 19	Naryn • Bishkek via Kochkor
Day 8, Monday, July 20	Bishkek • fly to Osh • Sary Tash
Day 9, Tuesday, July 21	Sary Tash • Kyzyl-Art Pass • Murghab, Tajikistan
Day 10, Wednesday, July 22	Murghab • Langar
Day 11, Thursday, July 23	Langar • Yamchun • Yamg • Ishkashim
Day 12, Friday, July 24	Ishkashim • Khorog
Day 13, Saturday, July 25	Khorog
Day 14, Sunday, July 26	Khorog • Kalaikhumb
Day 15, Monday, July 27	Kalaikhumb • Dushanbe
Day 16, Tuesday, July 28	Dushanbe
Day 17, Wednesday, July 29	Dushanbe
Day 18, Thursday, July 30	Depart Dushanbe



## MIR Signature Experiences

- Witness the spirit of Kyrgyzstan at exhilarating horse games.
- Hike in the alpine scenery of the Kyrgyz highlands near the Chinese border.
- Meet families from a recently resettled Afghan Pamir community now residing in Naryn.
- Visit the massive stone Silk Road caravanserai at Tash Rabat.
- Cross the border at a rarely-used frontier station near dramatic mountain passes.
- Admire the unmatched mountain scenery and plunging valleys along the Pamir Highway, one of the highest international highways in the world.
- Explore the capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Khorog, set at 7,000 feet near the Afghan border.
- Overnight in the village of Kalaikhumb, Tajikistan, once the home of a mighty fortress.
- Visit the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, named for the Persian word for Monday.

## Tour Highlights

Bishkek	Capital of Kyrgyzstan, Ala-Too Mountain views, “Manas on the Horse” Monument, Oak Park, State Museum of Fine Arts, Main Square, Osh Bazaar, Monument of Peace and Friendship, Open-Air Sculpture Garden, silk workshop <i>Bukon</i> , Chingiz Aitamov House-Museum, Ata-Beyit Memorial Complex
Chon-Kemin	Traditional <i>Manas</i> performance, Tushoo Kesuu Rite of Passage, yurt set-up demonstration
Son Kul	National horse game “Kok-Boru,” visit with a local shepherd with milking demonstration, overnight in a yurt in an alpine setting, optional horseback riding
Burana Tower Naryn	One of the few remaining Silk Road watchtowers in Kyrgyzstan 6,700+ feet above sea level, visit with resettled Afghan Pamir community, lunch with a local family, <i>beshbarmak</i> and <i>boorsok</i> cooking demonstration, felt carpet-making demonstration
Tash Rabat	Ancient Silk Road caravanserai
Kochkor	Lunch with a local family
Osh	Alymbek Datka Complex, Alisher Navoi Park, Jayma Bazaar
Pamir Highway	Sary Tash, 14,050-foot Kyzyl-Art Pass, Karakul Lake, 15,270-foot Ak-Baital Pass
Murghab	Highest town in Tajikistan, Yak’s House Tourist Center, local market, Murghab River
Wakhan	Langar Village, Yamchun Fort, Bibi Fatima Hot Springs, Vrang Buddhist stupa, village museums in Yamg and Namadgut, Ismaili shrines
Khorog	Pamiri Handicrafts Center, Pamir Botanical Garden, Ismaili <i>jamaatkhana</i>
Kalaikhumb	Fortress of Kalaikhumb, Khumbob and Panj rivers
Dushanbe	National Museum of Tajikistan, Museum of National Antiquities Gurminj Museum of Musical Instruments
Hissar	Hissar Fortress and historical complex, Silk Road center of commerce and learning



## Daily Itinerary

**Important notes:** *This tour has an **extensive driving program**. On the days where drive times are significant, we've indicated driving distances, expected driving times, and road conditions. Please note that stops along the way will be made for rest and photo opportunities.*

*Please note when outside the major cities on this tour, accommodations and facilities are extremely basic and limited. Many nights multiple group members will share accommodations in a yurt or guesthouse room; shared accommodations may be mixed-sex. Toilet facilities are shared with group members and other travelers, and are often outhouse-style. Showers and hot water are often unavailable. Please see Important Notes section on page 21 for more information.*

*Please see the notes later in this document under "Pre-tour Information" for details on hotel check-in time at the beginning of the program and best arrival times in Bishkek.*

### Day One, Monday, July 13 Arrive Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Arrive in the early hours of this morning in Bishkek and take some time to rest before an afternoon city tour. The capital of Kyrgyzstan, **Bishkek** was founded as the Russian garrison of Pishpek. The city is set before a backdrop of the northern edge of the **Ala-Too mountain range**, and was originally a heavily forested rest stop on the Silk Road. Appropriated by the Russians in 1877, the city was eventually re-named Bishkek when Kyrgyzstan achieved its independence at the break-up of the Soviet Union. Two rivers, the Alamedin and Ala-Archa, run from the mountains through the city into the Chuy River, which also forms the Kazakh border. Bishkek is graced with large boulevards, friendly people and more trees than any other Central Asian city. On clear days, the permanently snowcapped mountains looming over the city provide spectacular views.



An exploration of Bishkek begins with a general introduction to the city center, and a stop at **Oak Park** to see the **Village of Manas**, and the monument "**Manas on the Horse**."

Bishkek's **central square, Ala-Too**, was laid out in 1984 and adorned with a giant statue of Lenin. In 2003, Lenin was replaced by a new statue, called Freedom. Then, in 2011, that statue was in turn replaced with one of Manas to celebrate Kyrgyzstan's 20th anniversary. This is where the public gathers to celebrate – or to demonstrate.



Begun in 1984, the **Open-Air Sculpture Garden in Oak Park** features some 200 sculptures arranged among the greenery. The original pieces were created by Soviet artists on the theme of "Peace and Labor."

**Youth Alley** runs from the mayor's office up to the National University, where students come and go. The tree-lined avenue is just west of the Philharmonic building, and is the site of Bishkek's first art installation, a huge pair of sunglasses called "Point of View."

Celebrate the beginning of the adventure today with a welcome dinner at a local restaurant before overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B, D – *Plaza Hotel or similar*

## Day Two, Tuesday, July 14 Bishkek

Spend the day exploring Bishkek and learning more about this mountainous nation's culture, history and politics. Spend time the **State Museum of Fine Arts**, featuring Kyrgyz embroidery, jewelry and unique felt rugs, and visit a local Kyrgyz designer's workshop that is located on the outskirts of Bishkek. Enjoy a **master class in silk scarf-making ornamented with wool**. During the class you will see the entire process from dyeing the silk and wool to drying.

Next explore the **Chingiz Aitmatov House-Museum**. Located inside the presidential residency, the house where Kyrgyzstan's best known author, Chingiz Aitmatov, and his family lived since 1986 is now a home-museum, with rooms filled with original belongings, manuscripts, and furnishings of this beloved national writer. View Aitmatov's writing desk, typewriter, books, photographs, awards, and even his glasses at his bedside. In one room, a wall displays posters of Aitmatov's books made into movies, while other rooms are filled with Central Asian paintings of nature – perhaps inspiration for his writings.

Born to Kyrgyz and Tatar parents, Aitmatov wrote post-war literature in both Kyrgyz and Russian, exploring themes of Central Asian life and identity in his novels, including "Jamila," "The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years," and "Tales of the Mountains and Steppes." In 1963, Aitmatov received the Lenin Prize, the most prestigious award given in the former Soviet Union for literature, science, and arts. His works were translated into more than 175 languages and published in 128 countries, with more than 100 million copies sold. In addition to his writings, Aitmatov was also a Soviet ambassador as well as a friend and adviser to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Aitmatov died at age 80 of kidney failure in 2008.



**Ata-Beyit (Cemetery of the Fathers)** is a memorial complex honoring the victims of the 1937-38 Stalinist repressions. The memorial was built close to the spot where 137 bodies were discovered in a mass grave. An estimated 10,000 people were killed in Kyrgyzstan during the 1930s, including the founders of the original Kyrgyz Soviet State. The complex has been given even more relevance with the burial here of 20 of the people killed in the mass revolt of April 2010.



The sights, smells and sounds of bazaars are part of the sensory experience of Bishkek, and there are several within the city; the largest is **Osh Bazaar**. Travelers can purchase local crafts, dried fruit, fermented milk, rice, grains, and of course the brightly colored Kyrgyz textiles by haggling with the traders in these markets.

Enjoy an evening to **explore independently**.

Meals: B, L – *Plaza Hotel or similar*

*Day Three, Wednesday,  
July 15*

**Bishkek • Chon-Kemin**

Today, depart the capital and head into the countryside, where the economy is dominated by agriculture. First, make a stop at the 11th-century **Burana Tower**, one of the only existing watchtowers on the old Silk Road that traversed Kyrgyzstan. Climb up to the platform from inside the tower if you'd like; although the ancient steps are steep, the view from the top is magnificent. The area was historically a settlement called Balasagun, the birthplace of the poet Jusup Balasagun, whose

surviving work consists of an epic poem called "*Kutadgu Bilig*" or "the knowledge which brings happiness." The settlement was an important seat of power, and was so celebrated that Genghis Khan's Mongol horde spared the city from destruction when it began to conquer the region in the early 13th century. The Mongols renamed the city Gobalik, meaning "good city." Visit the small museum and its collection of ancient *bal-bals*, carved stone figures used as monuments.



The beautiful steep-sided **Chon (Big) Kemin Valley** runs parallel to the border of Kazakhstan between two mountain ranges. The valley's population is mostly Kyrgyz, of the Sary Bagysh tribe, and many traditions are still practiced here.



Watch an up-close **demonstration of how the Kyrgyz set up their yurts**, the round collapsible homes that nomads have lived in for thousands of years. The walls of a yurt are typically made of sections of birch or willow lattice formed into a circle and secured with leather straps. In the center of the ceiling is a hole that allows smoke to escape and fresh air and light to enter. Modern yurts may be covered with canvas rather than with traditional felted wool. The art of setting up a yurt was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2014.

Next, attend a traditional Kyrgyz rite of passage ceremony called **tushoo kesuu**, which celebrates the moment when a toddler begins making its first steps. As part of the ceremony, the young child will receive a special blessing from the community, and its legs gently tied with cord to form a symbolic hobble. Afterwards, guests at the ceremony tie their own ankles together and compete in a fun and friendly race for the prize: a chance to cut the child's hobble and help it take a short victory lap, thereby signifying the child's release into the world. Witness this spirited ceremony at the home of a local family, and enjoy lunch with them.

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This evening, enjoy a traditional folklore concert with a **Manas performance** around a campfire, recited by a Manaschi, a trained specialist in this art. The Kyrgyz mythical hero, Manas, fought against the Uighur people in the 9th century. His story, the *Epic of Manas*, is a Kyrgyz epic poem with nearly a half-million verses, listed by UNESCO as a part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Never written down until the 19th century, the poem has been passed down by word of mouth for centuries. Selections from



the beloved poem are often recited at Kyrgyz festivals, accompanied on the *komuz*, a traditional three-stringed instrument.

Meals: B, L, D – *Ashu Guesthouse or similar*

\***Driving time** today will total about 3 hours, covering a distance of 135 km (83 mi).

*Day Four, Thursday, July 16*

**Chon-Kemin • Son Kul**

Depart the guesthouse this morning and proceed along a route that follows the old Silk Road through the Kyrgyz highlands toward the Chinese border to Son Kul Lake.

**Son Kul Lake** is the second largest lake in Kyrgyzstan after Issyk-Kul and due to its remote location, offers a glimpse into the life of nomadic Kyrgyz herders. The high-altitude lake is surrounded by yurts and lush pastures, called *jailoo*, where animals graze in the summer months. All the routes down to the lake offer spectacular views.



Take in a spirited match of **Kok-Boru**, a traditional Kyrgyz equestrian sport played sort of like polo, only with a goat carcass.

Originating hundreds of years ago, modern Kok-Boru competitions stem from early medieval steppe games played among young shepherds, who needed to protect their flocks from wolves and other natural predators in the wild. The game pits two teams of horsemen against each other in an all-out fight for possession of a goat carcass. Two goals, called *kazan*, are situated at either end of the playing field, and the team that manages to toss the goat into their goal the most number of times wins the game. This sport is such a significant component of Kyrgyz culture, that it was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2017.

**Spend time with a local, semi-nomadic shepherd family.** Join them in their daily routine, which can include everything from milking the animals to participating in the felt carpet-making process.

Visit the family in their yurt where you will see and **experience how they milk mares and make *kymyz***, or fermented mare's milk. *Kymyz* is served to guests in yurt camps to show hospitality. Even if you only stop by to visit someone in their yurt camp for a moment, expect a big bowl of *kymyz* before you leave. *Kymyz* is also known for its positive health effects; some locals go on straight *kymyz* diets for weeks in the belief the *kymyz* has cleansing effects.



Also learn about other everyday dairy-based meals of nomads: *Jarma* - a beverage made from ground cereals. You boil the ground cereal in water, let it cool, and mix it with *ayran*, a yogurt beverage with salt added to it. The resulting drink comes out slightly fizzy. *Chalap* - another popular dairy-based beverage of Kyrgyz people. It's made of *katik* (a thick, fermented milk drink), salt, and carbonated water. *Kurut* - a dried, salty, milk-based snack. *Kaimak* - fresh, thick cream.

Afterwards enjoy a **walk in the alpine scenery** or take an optional **horseback ride**.



Tonight, stay in a local **yurt camp**, the traditional dwelling of nomadic herders.  
Meals: B, L, D – *Son Kul Yurt Camp* (shared accommodations)

\***Driving time** today will be 4-5 hours, covering a distance of 260 km (160 mi). A stop will be made along the way for light hiking.



*Day Five, Friday, July 17*

**Son Kul • Naryn**

Continue on to Naryn for dinner and overnight at a guesthouse.

Set between red sandstone cliffs and low green hills at 6,700+ feet above sea level, Naryn is the coldest city in Kyrgyzstan. The administrative center of the mostly rural Naryn Oblast, the city of 40,000 has a good regional museum and a small bazaar.

This afternoon, visit a **Kyrgyz community from Afghan Pamir (Kulanak Village)**, resettled in October 2017 to Kulanak Village in Naryn. The six families total 33 people, including children and teenagers who attend local schools.

The families wear traditional clothing in their daily lives, speak pure Kyrgyz, and can share their Pamir culture, music, and history, as well as their attempts to assimilate into local Kyrgyz life.



Observe the **traditional craft of felt-making**, a craft that has survived the centuries. Kyrgyz have always used felted wool to cover their yurts, and to make rugs, bags, slippers and hats. To make an *ala-kiyiz* rug, a second layer of felt of one or more colors is pressed into the original piece, creating a rug with a fuzzy pattern. A *shyrdak* is made with the appliqué method, and results in a crisper design.

In 2012, the art of making these felt rugs was included on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Those who know how to make them are mostly older women and the knowledge is not being passed down to new generations. Felt rugs have been used by nomads to warm and brighten their portable homes for millennia, and it takes the effort of many people working together to produce them. As the nomadic lifestyle is lost, and synthetic rugs become cheaper and more available, the demand for the *shyrdak* and *ala-kiyiz* is waning. Meals: B, L, D – Khan Tengri Guesthouse or similar

\***Driving time** today will total from 2-3 hours, covering a distance of 150 km (93 mi).



*Day Six, Saturday, July 18*

**Naryn • day trip to Tash Rabat**

Following breakfast at the guest house, begin a day trip to Tash Rabat. Once here, enjoy a cooking demonstration of Kyrgyz favorites. Learn how to cook one of Kyrgyzstan's beloved specialties, **beshbarmak**. *Beshbarmak* is the national meat and noodle dish of the nomadic Kyrgyz people. Meaning "five fingers" because it is traditionally eaten by hand, it is served on a large dish accompanied by *shorpo*, a meat broth.

Observe how locals make a favorite Kyrgyz fried snack called **boorsok**, which are made from a simple yeasted dough, rolled flat and cut into strips, then lightly fried in oil over a wood stove. Left plain, they make a tasty savory snack to accompany traditional Kyrgyz dishes, while sweeter variations, often made with extra eggs and sugar in the dough, are served with honey, jam, powdered sugar, or butter. Try your hand at rolling, cutting, and frying the dough, then sample some of the warm *boorsok* with tea or coffee.





Continue exploring **Tash Rabat, a massive stone fortress and ancient caravanserai** used as a rest stop by 15th century Silk Road merchants. There is some evidence that dates the original structure to the 10th century, when it is thought to have been a monastery for Christians who came here before the Mongolian invasion and the spread of Islam. Situated at 11,580 feet, Tash Rabat is the largest stone structure in Central Asia, and its architecture is similar to that of Samarkand. The fortress contains numerous underground passages, secret

exits, and underground prisons.

Return to Naryn in the evening for dinner and an overnight.

Meals: B, L, D – *Khan Tengri Guest House or similar*

*\*Driving time today will be about 2 hours each way, covering a distance of 150 km (83 mi).*

### *Day Seven, Sunday, July 19*

#### **Naryn • Bishkek via Kochkor**

Continue on to **Kochkor**, a sprawling village located in the flat plain of a cup-shaped valley not far off the beaten path between Bishkek and Naryn. Named after the Russian Czarist Prime Minister Stolypin (or according to local legend after a particularly tenacious fighting sheep!), the town has lost its former German population and today is largely home to working-class Kyrgyz. Here you will **enjoy lunch with a local family**.

Continue on to **Bishkek** and check in to your hotel. Enjoy the rest of the day free to rest and relax.

Meals: B, L – *Plaza Hotel or similar*

*\*Driving time today will total about 6 or 7 hours, covering a distance of 360 km (224 mi).*

### *Day Eight, Monday, July 20*

#### **Bishkek • fly to Osh • Sary Tash**

This morning depart on a flight to **Osh**, where you will be met by a local guide and coach upon arrival. Osh is Kyrgyzstan's oldest and second-largest city, set in the fertile Fergana Valley near the border with Uzbekistan. The city was a center of silk production along the old Silk Road, and celebrated its 3,000th anniversary in 2000. Survey the city from sacred Sulaiman's Throne, a huge limestone and quartz mound where the prophet Sulaiman prayed, and may be buried.





A tour of Osh includes a walk through the clamor of the 2,000-year-old **Jayma Bazaar**, the biggest open-air market in Central Asia, and said to be the best market west of Kashgar. An experience for all five senses at the Jayma Bazaar, one of the largest open-air markets in Central Asia located in the north of Osh. The clamor of the crowds rises above the din of merchants selling colorful Kyrgyz textiles, *kalpaks*, fermented milk, spices, and dried fruits.

**Observe the process of bread baking**, a process so revered that in 2016 it was added to UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Watch the

baker prepare the dough, makes the fire in the clay tandoor oven, and slaps the rounds onto the sides of the oven.

Lunch at a local *chaikhana* (tea house). Here, enjoy Kyrgyz food in a traditional teahouse setting.

Later this afternoon, drive to Sary Tash along a serpentine road that passes through Taldyk Pass (3,615m, 11,680ft). Stopping for the evening here in Sary Tash, situated at an elevation of around 10,000 feet, ensures that you don’t miss any of the fantastic scenery between here and Murghab.

Meals: B, L, D – *Mirbek Guesthouse or similar*

*\*Driving time between Osh and Sary Tash will total about 3 hours, covering a distance of 185 km (115 mi)..*



*Day Nine, Tuesday, July 21*

**Sary Tash • Kyzyl-Art Pass •**

**Murghab, Tajikistan\***

Today pick up the **Pamir Highway** near the little town of **Sary Tash**, a collection of small houses and yurts that sees few tourists. Soon after, cross into Tajikistan. You’ll be riding in 4WDs to negotiate this part of the highway, which climbs over **14,050-foot Kyzyl-Art Pass** into Tajikistan and then across the Pamir Plateau. The road heads up **Ak-Baital Pass** at 15,270 feet, and then down to Murghab at approximately 12,000. The scenery here is as gorgeous as can be seen anywhere in the world. Tajikistan

is one of the last undiscovered travel destinations, and driving along this dramatic highway is an awe-inspiring experience.



Enjoy a picnic lunch en route at **Karakul Lake**. Created by a meteor about 10 million years ago, Karakul Lake's Kyrgyz name translates to "Black Lake" It is one of Central Asia's highest lakes. It has no drainage outlet (and is therefore an endorheic lake), is too high to support life, and is often frozen until late May. Because of this, the area surrounding the lake has a lonely, empty feeling. It has captured the imaginations of many travelers throughout history, including Marco Polo.

Meals: B, L, D – Pamir Hotel or similar (possible shared accommodations)



*\*Driving time today will total about 7 hours, covering a distance of 250 km (155 mi). The drive from Sary Tash to Murghab on the Kyzyl-Art Pass is steep with rough road conditions. Please note that at the Tajik border you will change vehicles and continue to Murghab.*

## Day Ten, Wednesday, July 22

### Murghab • Langar\*

**Murghab** is a town of about 4,000 people, the second largest town in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, a piece of disputed territory in the mountainous northeast corner of Tajikistan. Murghab, meaning “city of the birds,” is the **highest town in Tajikistan**, and sits at the junction of three major roads. Its people are half Tajik and half Kyrgyz, and one can see China from here. The area is a wonderful place to hike.



Visit the **local bazaar** and "**Yak House**" **souvenir shop** to admire the beautiful traditional Tajik handicrafts made from yak wool.

At an elevation of **14,252 feet**, **Khargush Pass** is the last high pass before heading down to the **Wakhan Valley** below, offering a first peek at Afghanistan and the snow-capped Hindu Kush Mountains in the distance. Descending from the pass and onto the Pamir Plateau, look for caravans of Kyrgyz nomads migrating from their pastures, or perhaps catch sight of Bactrian camels and orange marmots.

On arrival in **Langar** there may be time for a quick walk around the village. Set in the

Wakhan Corridor as far up the valley as one can go in Tajikistan, the small village of Langar centers around the small-scale agriculture of the surrounding fields. The village's Tajik name denotes a flat place in the mountains suitable for growing crops. The local Wakhi word for the village is Kikhn (pronounced



KEE-hun), an onomatopoeic name that describes the sound of the wind coming down off the nearby mountains.

Enjoy dinner and an overnight at a private guesthouse.  
Meals: B, L, D – *Yodgor Guesthouse or similar (shared accommodations)*

*\*Driving time today will total about 8-9 hours covering a distance of 250 km (155 mi) over mountainous terrain.*



### *Day Eleven, Thursday, July 23* **Langar • Yamchun • Yamg • Ishkashim\***

Set off today toward **Khorog**, continuing along the ancient branch of the Silk Road now known as the Wakhan Corridor. The road splits off from the main Pamir Highway and for the next two days follows a lower loop route before rejoining the main highway at Khorog, traveling at altitudes ranging from 8,500 to 9,800 feet. The route snakes among jagged peaks, plunging valleys and alpine meadows through the section of the Wakhan Corridor from **Langar** to Yamg, where traces of the old Silk Road can still be discerned. Follow in the footsteps of merchants, traders and “Great Game” players along the road, stopping along the way to visit hot springs, Buddhist stupas, Ismaili shrines, ruined forts, and local village museums.

Spend the night in a small hotel in the village of Ishkashim.  
Meals: B, L, D – *Mini-Hotel Orio, or similar*

*\*Driving time today will be about 2-3 hours and will cover a distance of 111 km (69 mi). Despite the relatively short distance, the day will be a long one due to photo stops and sightseeing along the way.*

### *Day Twelve, Friday, July 24* **Ishkashim • Yamg • Khorog\***

From Ishkashim, continue today to **Khorog**, luxuriating in the amazing views of the Pamirs on one side and the Hindu Kush on the other. Along the way, learn more about the region’s legacy, which is tied not only to the ancient Silk Route, but also to the “Great Game,” the struggle between Russia and Britain for control of Central Asia in the 19th century. The Pamir’s strategic location at the crossroads of Imperial Russia and Afghanistan ensured that it was a centerpiece in this struggle for expansion and influence. Here, on the fringes of empires, a treaty between Britain and Russia was eventually concluded that established a neutral buffer zone along a strip of the Wakhan Valley to Afghanistan. On arrival in Khorog, rest, relax and enjoy a hot shower and a good meal.

This afternoon, drive up to **Khorog’s Pamir Botanical Garden**, the second highest in the world, reaching to almost 13,000 feet. Alpine plants from all over the world are grown in this park-like setting.

In the evening, **pay a visit to a jamaatkhana in Khorog and sit in on an evening prayer service** with the local community. A *jamaatkhana* is a community house of worship for Ismailis, a branch of Shia Islam found throughout the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, as well as in nearby Afghanistan and



Pakistan, that focuses on the esoteric nature of God and the Islamic religion. While similar to a traditional Muslim mosque, *jamaatkhanas* allow both men and women to pray together in the same room, and are also used for social functions within the community.

Services typically last for about an hour, and visitors are permitted to sit and observe respectfully from the back of the room. If available, some local Ismaili attendees may be willing to sit and talk with visitors after the service.

Dinner this evening will be in a local restaurant.

Meals: B, L, D – *La'l Hotel or similar*

**\*Driving time** today from Yang to Khorog will be about 2-3 hours and will cover a distance of 104 km (65 mi).

## Day Thirteen, Saturday, July 25

### Khorog

This morning, browse the **local bazaar**, mingling with shoppers and admiring the array of fruits, vegetables, nuts and everyday necessities. If students' schedules permit, make a **visit to a classroom at a Khorog school**, meeting the schoolchildren and giving them an opportunity to practice their English.

During lunch today at a local restaurant, meet with a **special guest speaker from a local Tajik NGO** and hear about his experiences of living and working in Tajikistan.

This afternoon, learn more about the local economy and the impact NGOs such as Aga Khan are having on Tajikistan with a visit to the local handicraft souvenir center and the beautiful riverside Khorog City Park, opened in 2009 by the Aga Khan himself.

Meet and converse with accomplished Tajik artisans at the **Pamiri Handicrafts Center**, and learn how they developed their expertise in these crafts. Local artisans include Gulsara, who creates and sews Tajik national clothing and hats; Nekbakht Oshurmamadova, who creates colorful slip-stitch socks (*jurab*) that have been part of the region's culture for generations; and Lola, who creates Tajik-style jewelry made of beads and stones.

**Khorog's central park** is located on the banks of the Ghunt River and is filled with poplar trees and grass, providing a lush, green contrast to the surrounding mountains. The park contains a small souvenir store selling local handicrafts and a restaurant with views of the river, mountains, and city.

Meals: B, L, D – *La'l Hotel or similar*



## Day Fourteen, Sunday, July 26

### Khorog • Kalaikhumb\*

Drive along the Afghan border to the little village of **Kalaikhumb** in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province. Once the home of a **great fortress**, Kalaikhumb is now a small hamlet at the joining of two rivers, the **Khumbob** and the **Panj** on the Afghan border. The sleepy village sits between Khorog and Dushanbe and is often used as a stopping point on the road between these two cities.

Although **Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast** ("Region") – GBAO for short – is located in southeastern Tajikistan along the Afghan border, it feels like a separate country. This isolated area of the majestic 24,000-foot Pamir Mountains is known as the "roof of the world," with stunning landscapes, snow peaks, and fast-moving rivers.

GBAO was created in 1925 and attached to the Tajik Soviet republic in 1929, with Khorog its capital city. After the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. in 1991, civil war broke out in Tajikistan and GBAO declared independence from the republic. It later backed down and remains a part of Tajikistan. GBAO makes up about 45% of Tajikistan, yet only a fraction of the population lives within this region. The only way in and out of the region is via the often-unpaved, bumpy Pamir Highway.



On arrival in the village of Kalaikhumb, check in to a local hotel for dinner and overnight.

Meals: B, L, D – *Karon Palace Hotel or similar*

\***Driving time** today will be 6-7 hours and cover a distance of 250 km (155 mi).

## Day Fifteen, Monday, July 27

### Kalaikhumb • Dushanbe\*

Today continue on to **Dushanbe**, capital of Tajikistan (elevation approximately 2,300 feet). Named for the Persian word for Monday, Dushanbe was at one point a small market village where traders would gather each Monday to sell their goods. During the Soviet era the city grew to be the most important center of production in Tajikistan, and the Shohmansur covered market reflects its historical ties to local trade. As Tajikistan's capital, the city's tree-lined streets are home to many national museums and monuments, but watching the colorfully dressed locals stroll by from a park or café is a highlight in and of itself.

Meals: B, L (picnic lunch), D – *Hotel Serena or similar*

\***Driving time** today will be 8-10 hours and cover a distance of 360 km (223 mi).



## Day Sixteen, Tuesday, July 28

### Dushanbe

Enjoy a free morning to rest, shop, or sightsee. Gather for lunch before an exploration of the city.

Take a stroll in **Rudaki Park**. Located in the very center of Dushanbe, Rudaki Park is dedicated to the 9th-century Persian poet Rudaki. Paths wind through the flowers and grass, and a mosaic-covered statue of Rudaki and a fountain lie in its center. Families from all over Dushanbe flock here on warm evenings and holidays.

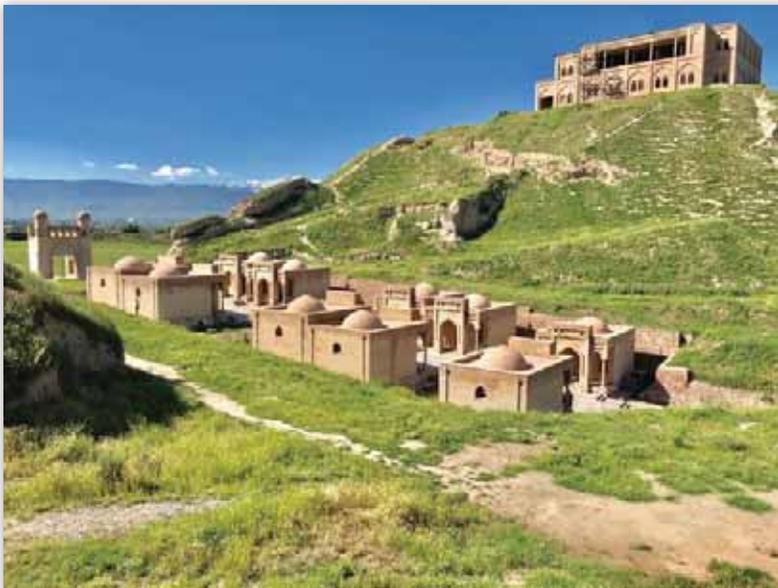
Make a stop at the **National Museum of Tajikistan**, filled with exhibits on Tajikistan's natural and political history as well as a collection of important Tajik cultural artifacts. Opened to the public in 2013, the museum is located in a large, modern building with an airy, light-filled space stretching from the ground floor to the glass ceiling four stories up. The structure is capped by an enormous model of Tajikistan's national seal.

Dinner tonight is independent.

Meals: B, L – *Hotel Serena or similar*

## Day Seventeen, Wednesday, July 29

### Dushanbe



This morning drive out of town to **Hissar**. Just 18 miles from Tajikistan's capital in a valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains, the city of Hissar is dominated by the **18th century Hissar Fortress and historical complex**. The area has been inhabited since antiquity and features an 8th-century mosque, but it was the emirs who inhabited the fortress and the Silk Route traders that crossed the valley who made Hissar a **center of commerce and learning**. Several *madrasahs*, Islamic religious schools, that date from the period of the Bukharan Emirate are still standing today.

The remains of a palace used by governors of the Bukharan Emirate are also located at the site. Their thick baked-brick walls once guarded a pool, garden, and palace, and sat opposite a noisy market and caravanserai. This strategically important fortress guarded the town, which was once a staging post on the old Silk Road. It is said that it was overcome and destroyed by the likes of Cyrus the Great and Alexander the Great. What remains today is a portion of the wall and two monumental gate towers from the 18th century.



Opened in 2001, **Dushanbe's Museum of Antiquities** displays ancient artifacts of the many cultures and religions that influenced the Silk Road, including Greek, Roman, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Hindu. Its centerpiece is the 5th century Reclining Buddha, unearthed from a Buddhist monastery complex in Ajina Tepe in southern Tajikistan. The peaceful 46-foot Buddha is now the largest in Central Asia, since the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. The same Kushan civilization that produced the Bamiyan Buddhas is responsible for the Tajik Reclining Buddha.



The adjoining **Ethnographic Museum** showcases traditional Tajik crafts, including ceramics, embroidered fabrics, woodcarving and jewelry.

Visit the small but fascinating **Gurminj Museum of Musical Instruments**, founded by Badakhshani actor Gurminj Zavkybekov. Displaying a fine collection of beautifully crafted antique and modern instruments from Afghanistan, the Pamirs, Turkey and China, the museum is often the scene of exuberant performances and demonstrations.

This evening enjoy an early **farewell dinner** and toast the end of this overland expedition.  
Meals: B, D – *Hotel Serena or similar*

*Day Eighteen, Thursday, July 30*  
**Dushanbe**

Early morning transfer to the airport for international departure.  
Meals: B (if flight time permits)

### **Dates for 2020 – One Departure – Explorer Series**

The land itinerary is scheduled to be operated on the following dates. Please note that you will need to depart the U.S. one to two days prior to the tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

July 13-30, 2020

### **Package Prices – 2020 Pricing Information**

5-12 passengers, \$7,895 per person, twin share  
Plus internal air \$80 per person (economy class, subject to change)  
Partial single supplement \$825\*

*\*A partial single supplement is available for this tour. Single rooms are only available in the standard hotels in Bishkek, Naryn, Khorog, Kalaikumb, and Dushanbe (total 11 nights), but are not available on other parts of the itinerary such as in yurts in Kyrgyzstan and at rustic guesthouses on the Pamir route in Tajikistan. For these non-hotel nights, group members will share sleeping quarters and WC facilities with multiple travelers. Shared accommodations may be mixed-sex.*



## Land Tour Includes

- Accommodations as noted in itinerary. In the cities of Bishkek, Khorog, Kalaikhumb, and Dushanbe hotels are of the three to four star level (collectively 10 nights). The single night in Naryn is spent at a small guesthouse with private, en-suite rooms. Yurts are utilized for the night spent at Son Kul (shared sleeping accommodations, outhouse-style WC facilities). Very basic guesthouses/small private hotels are used for the other six nights with shared sleeping accommodations, and usually with outhouse WCs. Shared accommodations may be mixed-sex.
- 18 breakfasts, 15 lunches and 14 dinners. A few meals are not included so that you may enjoy a chance to experiment on your own.
- Restaurant tips for included meals.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers and other staff, including a MIR Tour Manager.
- Arrival/departure airport transfers. MIR will arrange for all travelers to be met on arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your airfare arrangements or not, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates in the tour start/end cities.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private mini-coach, jeep or van (size of vehicle depends on group size and terrain and will vary from country to country).
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers, porters and other service personnel.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* hand-book with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Customized visa application and instruction kit (please note, visa fees are not included in the tour price).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

## Not Included in Land Tour Price

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Baggage handling.
- Gratuities to Tour Manager.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

### Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp) or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.



## Start Planning Next Year Now

### Dates for 2021- One Departure - Explorer Series

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Next year's dates and prices are shown below – please call if you're ready to book now.

July 12-29, 2021

### Package Prices - 2021

5-12 passengers, \$7,995 per person, double occupancy  
Plus internal air \$100 (economy class, subject to change)  
Partial Single supplement \$895 per person.

## Explorer Series

Explorer Series tours, with a maximum of 12 travelers, are the perfect match for those seeking a more active adventure. These interactive cross-cultural journeys are more limited in size and more spacious in depth and focus. We use a variety of accommodations ranging from small private hotels to bed and breakfasts to rustic lodges and homestays, and trips may feature hiking opportunities.

## Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

This Explorer Series program, by nature, is designed to be comfortable for western travelers, but is a **very adventurous** program to a rustic part of the world. Accommodations will vary widely, and will include three and four-star hotels in Bishkek, Khorog, Kalaikhumb, and Dushanbe (collectively 10 nights). The single night in Naryn is spent at a small guesthouse with private, en-suite rooms. One night is spent in a yurt/tent camp in Son Kul, Kyrgyzstan with camp-like facilities and no indoor plumbing; yurts are shared among several group members. An additional six nights are spent in homestays/guesthouses/small private hotels where sleeping accommodations may be shared with other group members and WCs will be rustic outhouses. Yurts, and even guesthouses, can be cold at night, and hot water and/or showers are often unavailable.

**Please note:** the hotel room capacity in Khorog is relatively small, and it is possible the group will be split between two different properties.

Services are improving in the region; however, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, and availability and quality of public restrooms. In some places, established public restrooms will be Eastern-style. In other places where there are no restrooms, the group will make "bush stops." Hot running water is not a constant in this part of the world, as municipal water systems are sometimes under repair in the warmer months and some guesthouses or yurt camps do not offer running hot water. We are traveling in some areas which, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed. Air conditioning is a luxury and not available in facilities outside capital cities.



This program is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved (with some hiking), extended travel at high altitudes, several very long driving days and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure, particularly in Tajikistan. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot, and long days of driving – required to experience some of the spectacular scenery. A large part of the trip is at a high elevation, ranging from 7,000 to over 15,000 feet (the highest points on the itinerary are en route from Sary Tash to Murghab: Kyzyl-Art Pass, 14,050 feet; on the way down to Langar there is another 14,000 foot+ pass, Khargush Pass, and Ak-Baital Pass, 15,270 feet above sea level).

This program makes use of guesthouses and rustic hotels, especially in the scenic, charming, and Pamir mountains. **Guesthouse accommodations are extremely basic** – toilets are often shared among all group members as are showers, and guesthouses may not have electricity. The group may be in multiple separate guesthouses. If you rely on electricity for CPAP, or for any other reason, you must have your own battery or other back-up, or please reconsider participation.

**Those with a history of medical problems, particularly cardiac or respiratory, must consult a doctor before considering this trip.** Some drives will be more than six hours and have significant segments along dirt roads, unpaved roads, or poorly maintained and therefore very bumpy asphalt. **Expect rough, dusty roads**, for long periods of time. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least two miles a day, keeping up with fellow travelers, and must enjoy the sense of adventure that comes with overland travel over dusty, rough roads. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We will do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Central Asia, this may not always be possible. This tour maintains a focus on cultural interaction and we will be visiting private homes and sharing meals with local residents. It is therefore important that tour members have a desire to involve themselves in the local culture in order to fully enjoy this trip. If you are looking for a less adventurous experience, MIR offers other scheduled small group tour options featuring more comfortable accommodation and which do not venture into the remote and undeveloped Pamir region. Please ask for details on these tours (**Journey Through Central Asia**) as well as a custom private journey which may be a better match for your interests and physical capabilities.

## Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp)

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Kyrgyzstan here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/the-kyrgyz-republic-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Tajikistan here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/tajikistan-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>



## Weather

Central Asia experiences hot summers and cold winters. This trip travels in the highlands and across mountain passes, making July/August an ideal time to visit. Rain is minimal. Daytime temperatures range from 60 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (depending on altitude), with colder temperatures at Torugart Pass and other high passes.

**Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable.** This information comes from [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

## International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carrier for this tour is Turkish Airlines, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Central Asia.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

## Visas

At this time, one visa is required for this tour for U.S. citizens: **Single-entry Tajik with GBAO permit.** You may also need a visa for any country which you fly through in order to join the tour (such as Turkey). Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to obtain the required visas. MIR will provide you with the necessary applications and instructions.

The Tajik visa is now an e-Visa, issued online and paid directly by your credit card. The process costs approximately \$52 and does not require the physical passport to be sent to an embassy or consulate. MIR will provide detailed instructions on how and when to complete the online process for the Tajik visa.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR's preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR's preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

## Pre-Tour Information

Please note that touring begins on Monday, Day One of the Heavenly Tien Shan program, around 1:00 p.m. Because of common flight arrival times into Bishkek, for your convenience MIR has pre-booked the Bishkek hotel from the Sunday before Day One, with rooms available for check-in after 2:00 p.m. on Sunday. Many clients will arrive late Sunday night or in the very early hours of Monday morning (1:00 a.m. or similar). These clients will have access to their rooms on arrival. Clients needing room access



before 2:00 p.m. on the Sunday before Day One will need to have additional night or nights pre-booked at additional expense, which MIR will be happy to assist with.

## Also Nearby...

For more tours to Central Asia, you may want to check out the following trips:

### Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

**Essential Tajikistan, 8 days.** Rarely-visited Tajikistan is wreathed in spectacular mountains and colored with the influence of Persia, the Islamic world and Russia. Meet local people at Fergana Valley markets, explore the ruins of ancient Penjikent and share a meal in a warm Tajik home. Visit the country's capital, Dushanbe, where an airy, light-filled space is home to the modern National Museum of Tajikistan.

**Essential Kazakhstan, 7 days.** Begin in the new city of Astana, capital of Kazakhstan only since 1997. Fly to Chimkent and discover the historic city of Turkistan with its UNESCO-listed mausoleum of a revered Sufi sheikh. Fly to Almaty and explore spectacular Charyn Canyon, with its strange rock formations and colorful strata.

**Essential Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 13 days.** Explore the markets, mosques and minarets of oasis towns on the fringes of the Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum deserts. Here spiritual beliefs were the greatest commodities to flow along trade routes, and civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

**Essential Uzbekistan, 10 days.** Roam the great Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, all of them UNESCO Sites. Admire their mosques, *madrassahs* and minarets clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

### Small Group Tours

**Silk Road Backroads & Byways, 19 days.** Shaped over thousands of years by remarkable ancient cultures and ambitious empires, the fascinating countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan encompass some of the most spectacular and absorbing hidden corners of Central Asia. Dive deep into the distinct cultural identities and multi-layered history of these extraordinary lands, discovering ancient desert citadels, dramatic Silk Road fortresses, and surprising Soviet-era remnants, and connect with artists and villagers along the way.

**Return to the North Caucasus, 14 days.** Discover the ravishing mountain landscapes, medley of cultures, and overflowing hospitality of North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan in the North Caucasus region, where ancient mountain tribes have guarded their way of life for thousand of years.

**Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans, 22 days.** More than 2,000 years ago, the great trade routes that linked Europe and China opened Central Asia to foreign cultures, customs and religions. Join a modern-day caravan on an epic journey to five of these exotic countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

**Silk Route Odyssey: Caravan Across Uzbekistan, 15 days.** The center of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is home to three of the most renowned of the Silk Road oases – Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Journey through these UNESCO Sites and the lush Fergana Valley, where Central Asia's silk production began with two cocoons hidden in the headdress of a royal Chinese bride.



## Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

## Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Air fares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

### *MIR Small Group Tours*

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

## References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers who have been to Central Asia with MIR. Please request a list of references.

## Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

## Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

## 30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us



their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

### Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.



### More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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