



I'm incredibly excited that you are interested in traveling on GlobalOkie's October 2025 **Central Asia/Silk Road/5 'stans trip!** This trip is very personal for me; I was considering making the journey solo, but then thought it might be fun to see if there were other like-minded folks who might want to share the experience with me. I'm glad I did as those who have responded so far are just as pumped as I am about this unique travel experience! This region is someplace I've dreamt of adventuring to since I was a young boy, mesmerized by glossy National Geographic magazine features, Cold War maps, and epic stories of travelers, such as Marco Polo, traversing the diverse and rugged Silk Road. There are so many cultural, natural, architectural, and historic wonders to witness in person and I thought a two week "exploration" trip would be ideal. This is also a covid "make-up" trip for me as I had a three-week trip through the five 'stans and the Caucasus Region planned for the summer of 2020. I'll never forget the email I got in February 2020 that let me know my Azeri visa was being "annulled." I wasn't exactly sure what that meant at the time, or if I might have to work around or omit a few countries, but we all know what came next. So...if you're up for a true adventure, I hope you can join me and about a dozen other enthusiastic travelers on this incredible journey to a part of the world very few travelers know much about, let alone visit. Rest assured that my local travel team and I have crafted a wonderful itinerary and are excited to share the wonders of Central Asia with you!

This is a very unique tour and contains a lot of "moving parts" (border crossings, modes of transportation, one night in a yurt or tent, etc) so as with any off-the-beaten-path global journey, I'd ask that you only sign up if you possess a bit of flexibility, patience, adventure, and curiosity. Don't worry – it'll be plenty comfortable, and I promise you it'll be epic and provide a lifetime of memories and stories for all of us upon our return.

This will be a small-group trip with very limited space available and a fantastic Early-Bird Enrollment Discount, so sign up soon!

Here is the nitty-gritty!

*\*Participants should be in good health, comfortable walking 4-6 hours daily at a moderate pace, managing stairs and short ascents. Rest assured, we'll ensure plenty of breaks to enjoy the journey together at a comfortable pace.*

#### Trip Dates:

- **October 13-26, 2025** (will need to arrive in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 13 October; depart Tashkent, Uzbekistan on 26 October)
  - Feel free to make plans to travel earlier or stay later (maybe a stop for a day or two in Europe or Doha, Qatar on the way...?)
  - I am happy to assist with international insurance and travel arrangements; I have a wonderful local travel agent who I work closely with to find the best routes and deals.

#### Cost:

- **Early bird special!** - \$4,580 - plus international air (travel between countries will be organized and is included), travel insurance (medical/accident/repatriation insurances required; cancelation/delay/luggage highly recommended), etc (see details below)
  - **This price is for those who pay the deposit before 15 December 2024 and includes a 10% discount off the trip total which will lock in the price; price will increase 10% after 15 Dec 2024.**
  - Single room supplement charge: \$580 – if requested, I will do my best to pair you with a same-gender roommate if you're traveling solo and wouldn't mind sharing a twin room, saving the single room supplement (cannot guarantee).

#### Payment Schedule:

- You are welcome to pay balance in full or visit with me if you'd like to consider a different payment schedule. Easy payments via: check, wire transfer, Venmo, CashApp, or credit card (let me know and I can send a Square credit card payment link)
  - Due upon enrollment: \$1,500 (non-refundable unless provider cancels trip; will attempt to cancel with replacement with partial refund)
    - **Early bird discount of 10% ends 15 December 2024**
  - Deposit upon enrollment: \$1,500 (non-refundable after 15 days)
  - Due prior to February 15, 2025: \$1,500
  - Due prior to May 15, 2025: balance

#### To Enroll:

- Read the trip terms and conditions in this document (deposit and cancelation policy differ slightly from the standard GlobalOkie Travel terms and conditions which are available on the [www.globalokie.com](http://www.globalokie.com) website). Go to the [www.globalokie.com](http://www.globalokie.com) website; near the bottom of the page, click on the link "ONLINE 2024-25 Enrollment Form"; complete and submit the online enrollment form; pay deposit via check, Venmo, CashApp, Credit Card (Square link can be texted or emailed). You're enrolled!!!

## **Includes:**

- All transfers on tour by van or mini-bus;
- Accommodation based on double/twin room sharing, breakfasts included;
- English-speaking local guides in each country;
- Entrance fees to sights as per itinerary;
- Economy class tickets for flights: Bishkek-Tashkent, Mary-Ashgabat, Urgench-Tashkent;
- Economy-class tickets for trains: Tashkent-Samarkand-Bukhara (on rare occasions when the high-speed train is unavailable, we will replace this with the most-comfortable class of regular train);
- Visa support for Uzbekistan triple entry visa;
- Visa support for Turkmenistan tourist visa;
- E-visa to Uzbekistan (triple entry) and e-visa to Tajikistan;
- National folklore show in Bukhara on Day 9;
- Meals: welcome lunch in Almaty on Day 2, lunch at home of a local family in Don-Aryk on Day 4, lunch at Seven Lakes on Day 7, lunch in Mary on Day 10, camp style dinner at Darvaza on Day 11, dinner in Khiva on Day 13.

## **Excludes:**

- Surcharge for staying in a single room;
- Full board (lunches and dinners; see above for included meals);
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- A tax of 2 USD per night in Turkmenistan, paid to the hotel upon check out;
- Consular fees for Turkmenistan tourist visas (appx 80 USD) and migration tax (14 USD);
- Consular/visa fees for Uzbekistan tourist visa at Tashkent International Airport (60-80 USD) or a multi-entry eVisa for US citizens is \$50 (Irish citizens do not need a visa for Uzbekistan)(US citizens 55+ can enter visa free);
- Visa support for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan tourist visas (no visa necessary for US/Irish citizens); US and Irish citizens do not need a visa to enter Tajikistan for up to 30 days;
- Personal travel insurance;
- Tips to local guides and drivers;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour.

## **Tentative Itinerary:**

### Summary:

- Almaty (2 nights); Bishkek (1 night); Tashkent (2 nights); Samarkand (2 nights); Penjikent (1 night); Bukhara (2 nights); Ashgabat (1 night); Darvaza (1 night); Khiva (1 night)

### Detailed:

- Day 1: Arrive in Almaty. Our driver will meet you and take you to the hotel. Check in after 14:00. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.

- Day 2: Almaty – Breakfast. At 09:00, our guide and driver will meet us in the hotel lobby to start a sightseeing tour of Almaty. Highlights of this morning will include Panfilov Park, Zenkov Cathedral, Republic Square, and the Almaty City Museum. After a welcome lunch, a short drive (25 km) will take you to Chimbulak. Here, we will visit the ski resort and ride the cable car to enjoy the amazing views of the snowy peaks of the Tian Shan Mountains. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.
- Day 3: Almaty-Bishkek – After breakfast depart Almaty and drive to Bishkek via a newly built highway, enjoy nature landscapes on the way (250 km, 4 h.). Upon arrival check-in at the hotel. Start sightseeing tour in Bishkek: visit Oak Park, Ala-Too Square, Statue of Manas. See Philharmonic Hall and Victory Monument – bright examples of Soviet architecture. Overnight at the hotel.

*Duration of sightseeing tour: 2-3 hours*

- Day 4: Bishkek–Burana–Don Aryk–Bishkek-Tashkent -- Breakfast. Depart Bishkek at 09:00. The first stop will be Burana Tower, which was part of the ancient city of Balasagun (11th to 13th centuries). Next on the agenda will be experiencing a Kyrgyz national horse game called “Ulak Tartysh” (goat pulling). Ulak Tartysh (also known as Kok Boru) is a fight between two teams of horse riders for a goat carcass. Transfer to Don Aryk village and have lunch at the home of a local Kyrgyz family. After lunch, watch a demonstration of yurt construction and even take part if you wish. Local Kyrgyz women will explain the meaning and use of each part of the yurt. Transfer to Bishkek airport (110 km, ~1h 30 min) to take flight to Tashkent, which arrives in the evening (1h 20 min). Transfer to the hotel for overnight.
- Day 5: Tashkent-Samarkand -- Breakfast. Start the Tashkent city tour at 10:00 by visiting the Old City of Tashkent. This area encompasses the Khast-Imam Complex (famous for displaying one of the earliest copies of the Qur’an, the Holy Book of Islam), and Chorsu Bazaar, where you can haggle for spices, dried fruit, and nuts. Then take a ride on Tashkent Metro to the city center to visit Applied Arts Museum and walk through Navoi Theater to Amir Timur Square where you will end Tashkent city tour. The city tour will take 4-5 hours, after which you’ll have some free time. At 18:00, transfer to the railway station. The high-speed train Afrosiyob, arrives in Samarkand around 21:00 (300 km, 2h 10 min). Transfer to the hotel for overnight.
- Day 6: Samarkand -- Breakfast. At 09:00, the city tour will begin with a visit to the spectacular Registan Square, followed by the Gur Emir Mausoleum, the final resting place of the Turco-Mongol emperor, Timur. Explore the Bibi Khanum Mosque and Shakhi-Zinda Necropolis, and then take a short drive to Konigil village to find out about the traditional techniques used to make the famous Samarkand paper from mulberry bark. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.

*Duration of sightseeing tour: 6-7 hours*

- Day 7: Samarkand-Penjikent -- Breakfast. At 10:00 am, transfer to the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border point, Jartepa (50 km, 1 h). Upon arrival at the customs and passport control on both sides, we will proceed to the exit of the border control area. At that

point, our guide/driver will be waiting for us. Meet your local Tajik guide and driver to drive to ancient Penjikent (80 km, ~1 h 30 min), the ruins of a town founded by the Sogdians in the 5th century and abandoned by Arabs in the 8th century. The foundations of houses, a citadel with a couple of Zoroastrian fire temples, and the remains of the city bazaar are visible in the excavated ruins. In the newer part of Penjikent, visit a local bazaar, a mosque, and the Rudaki Museum (Penjikent is the birthplace of Abu Abdallah Rudaki, considered by many to be the father of Persian poetry). After a 3-hour sightseeing tour check in the hotel. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.

- Day 8: Penjikent-Seven Lakes-Samarkand-Bukhara -- Breakfast. Drive to the Seven Lakes (80 km, ~2 h). These lakes are located in the western part of the Fann Mountains. Each lake has its own color, varying from calming turquoise to mesmerizing purple. Have lunch at the guest house next to the 4th lake. Those who would like to enjoy the view from the 7th lake there is an opportunity to have a hiking tour from the 6th lake up to the 7th lake. In the afternoon, drive to the JarTEpa border crossing (120 km, 2 h 30 min). Complete the border formalities. On the Uzbek side, we will meet our driver and then transfer to Samarkand. Free time in the city. At 20:45 transfer to the railway station. Take the high-speed Afrosiyob train departing at 21:43 and arriving in Bukhara at 23:25 (270 km, 1 h 35 min). Transfer to the hotel for overnight.
- Day 9: Bukhara -- Breakfast. At 10:00, start exploring the Old City of Bukhara. Highlights of the walking tour will include: the Lyabi Hauz Ensemble, Magoki-Attori Mosque, Chor-Minor Madrasa, Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque, Miri-Arab Madrasa, Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan Madrasas, Ark Fortress, Bolo-Khauz Mosque, Ismail Samani and Chashma-Ayub Mausoleums, and various trading domes. Free time from 15:00 until the National Show at Nadir Divan-begi Madrasa, which starts at 18:00. Overnight at the hotel.
- Day 10: Bukhara-Mary-Merv-Ashgabat -- Early breakfast. Depart at 06:30 for the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border point, Farap-Alat (100 km, 1 h 30 min). Upon arrival border formalities. After the customs and passport control at both checkpoints, we will proceed to the exit of the border control area. At that point, our guide/driver will be waiting for us. Continue to Merv (300 km, 5 h 30 min), an ancient city that was a major center of international trade and crafts on the Silk Road. Merv is also home to a historical park for you to discover, with sights including: the Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum, Major and Minor Kyz-Kala, Erk-Kala, Gyaur-Kala, Keshk Fortress, and others. Lunch at a local restaurant. Transfer to Mary Airport (40 km, 30 min) to take the evening flight to Ashgabat at 18:10. Upon arrival in Ashgabat at 18:50, transfer to the hotel for overnight.
- Day 11: Ashgabat-Darvaza Crater -- Breakfast, followed by a sightseeing tour of Ashgabat. Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, has recently been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as having more white marble buildings than any other city in the world. During the city tour, explore the archaeological site of Old Nissa (a

UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Spiritual Mosque, one of the biggest mosques in Central Asia. Visit the National Museum of History, the Monument of Neutrality, Ertugrul Gazi Mosque and the recently-built Independence Park. The sightseeing tour will take about 6 hours and the afternoon will feature a drive through the Karakum Desert to the famous Darvaza Gas Crater (280 km, 4 h). After arriving at the crater, camp will be set up and you'll enjoy a delicious, fire-cooked dinner near the "Gates of Hell". Overnight in tent/yurt.

**Note: At Darvaza camp you will be accommodated at a yurt or there is an option to have 1- or 2-person tents. In both cases, toilets and basic washing facilities are outside.**

- Day 12: Darvaza-Khiva -- Camp-style breakfast. Drive back through the Karakum Desert to the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border point, Dashoguz-Shavat (270 km, 4 h). Following border formalities at both checkpoints, your Uzbek driver will meet you to begin the trip to Khiva (60 km, 1 h). Upon arrival, check in to the hotel. Free time.
- Day 13: Khiva-Urgench-Tashkent -- Breakfast and hotel check out (the hotel will store your luggage safely for the day). Spend the morning at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ichan-Kala Fortress. Highlights of the morning walking tour include the Mukhammad Amin Khan Madrasa, Mukhammad Rahimkhan Madrasa, Kalta Minor, Juma Mosque, Tash-Khovli Palace, Pakhlavan Makhmud Mausoleum, and Minaret of Islom Khodja. Farewell dinner. Transfer to Urgench Airport at 20:30 (30 km, 35 min). Your flight to Tashkent departs at 22:55 and arrives at 00:15+1 (1,093 km, 1 h 40 min). Transfer to the hotel in Tashkent for overnight.
- Day 14: Check-out from the hotel at noon. Free time until transfer to Tashkent International Airport. Departure. End of the tour 😊

