



TURKMENISTAN

THE LAND OF THE TURKMEN

April 22 - May 02, 2025
Led by Local Guide

Turkmenistan is an independent and neutral state located in Central Asia. The geographical position is more advantageous than its neighbors due to the outlet to the Caspian Sea. When traveling far inland, you can see sandy deserts with barchans, as it is a country of deserts, oases, and unique historical and cultural traditions.

The most ancient civilizations of the world prospered on its territory. Turkmenistan is a country of contrasts, especially today, as the cities have entirely changed and become more similar to European megacities. But despite all the changes, their Oriental character has been preserved in unique architecture, decoration of buildings, numerous mosques, and ancient monuments. It is the least explored country on the Silk Road, with a rich ethnic tradition, world-famous carpets, moon-like landscapes, newly discovered ancient civilizations, spectacular Islamic monuments, and deserted caravan cities - a lost world of Central Asia.

Four-fifths of the country is covered by the large and spectacular Kara Kum or Black Sands desert, where we will observe an industrial phenomenon known as "Fire Crater or Gate to Hell." The country is home to Turkmen, who trace their descent from nomadic tribes living in the Altai Mountains above Mongolia in the 5th century AD. The warm and friendly Turkmen people are some of the most appealing in Central Asia. The Turkmen's traditional clothes, with huge sheepskin hats, long coats, and boots, are true to their nomadic traditions. From the middle of the 1st millennium BCE until the 10th century CE the territories of modern Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan were part of the Persian Empire. Later the Silk Road connecting China with Europe ran through the region.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Tuesday, April 22

Arrive in Ashgabat (TURKMENISTAN)



Upon arrival in **Ashgabat** in the early morning, meet and transfer to *Yyldyz Hotel* or similar for check-in, rest and in the afternoon, head to the main city, the "**Pearl of Central Asia**," capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, and explore the **Park of Independence**, including visits to the **independence monument**, one of the largest and most extravagant of its kind in the entire world and **Neutrality Square**, built by order of Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan in 1998. Also, visit the **Wedding Palace**- "Bagt Koshgi," built in 2011, and the **National Memorial Complex**, "Halk Hakydasy," with the WWII and Earthquake Memorial dedicated to the victims of the 1948 earthquake. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant and then return to the *Hotel* for overnight. **(B,D)**

Note: For convenience, the night of May 02 is included for immediate check-in upon the early morning arrival.

Saturday, May 04

Ashgabat



Begin the day with a visit to the **Fortress of Old Nisa**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the earliest of Parthian Empire capitals and is one of Turkmenistan's most significant cultural sites, the **Spirituality Mosque**, built in 2002-2004 on the initiative of Turkmenbashi and named after him. It is the biggest in Turkmenistan and the family mausoleum of the first President. Enjoy lunch then head in the afternoon to visit the **National Museum of History & Ethnography**, displaying more than 327,000 exhibits, and see exclusive ancient artifacts from

numerous historical and archeological sites. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, May 05

Ashgabat - Mary (Margush/Gonur Depe)



Transfer to the airport for our morning flight to **Mary**, and upon arrival, begin the drive northeast to **Margush/Gonur Depe** (25 miles Off-Road), where first agricultural settlements appeared in the delta of Murgab River dating to 3 millennium BC. Fertile silt from mountains, abundant water, and a moderate climate created favorable conditions for good crops, and the progress of the ancient economy continued for several centuries. It is the largest settlement of the Bronze Age in Central Asia (the end of the 3rd and middle of the 2nd millennium BC. It is also a symbol of the deepest origins of the Turkmen people, whose remote ancestors built such a culture that scholars around the world acquiesced: the country of Margush, whose center was Gonur-Depe, along with Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China, is one of the five primary centers of the world civilizations, where trade and cultural lines of international relations crossed. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the archeological site, then drive back to Mary, and transfer to *Mary Hotel* or similar for check-in, free afternoon at leisure, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, May 06

Mary (Ancient Merv) - Ashgabat



After breakfast, begin the drive to the east of Mary, towards **Bayram-Ali**, the contemporary re-incarnation of and humble suburb of the glorious Ancient Merv, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the major archaeological sites of Central Asia. Merv played an

important part in developing the Silk Road for over 2000 years. Get to observe all the constituent parts of the "wandering city." A series of adjacent cities, which can be roughly divided into the **ancient Erk Kala** and **Gyaur Kala**, the **medieval Sultan Kala** with its suburbs, and post-medieval **Abdulla-Khan Kala** and **Bayram-likhan Kala**, appeared over time as a pass of the natural progress of the city from initial stages of its existence to a more advanced level. Visit the VI-IX AD **forts** of Big and Little **Kyz-Kalas**, excellent examples of the so-called corrugated Koshks the splendid XII century **Mausoleums** of **Sultan Sanjar & Muhammed Ibn-Zeyd**, representing exquisite Seljuk period brickwork and architectural décor. Drive back to Mary & head to visit the local **History Museum**, presenting a wide array of archaeological finds dating back to the III millennium BC through the late XIX century from both the Ancient Merv and Bronze Age sites of the Margush country. Transfer to the airport for your afternoon flight back to **Ashgabat**, and upon arrival, transfer to *Yyldyz Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, May 07

Ashgabat (Darwaza)



After late breakfast, begin the day with a visit to the fabled Sunday Bazaar of Tolkuchka. Attracting colorfully dressed people from all over the country to buy or sell camels, cattle and poultry, amulets, carpets, jewelry, and myriads other things. From the market we head back to hotel to have rest. Drive to the **Village of Bokurdak**, located about 62 miles from Ashgabat. People live either in village houses made of unfired brick or in yurts. Visit a local family's home and see the traditional activities: embroidery, pichme (traditional bakery), baking bread, and cooking ishlekli (meat pies). We may see how they milk the camels if it is the season, and you may try it or enjoy a cup of tea. Learn the significance of the amulets and protective Alaja strings used in everyday life of Turkmen semi-nomads. Head north to former **Darvaza** along the newly built north-south highway stopping en route at a desert settlement, **Yerbent**, which can give us an idea of what desert life looks like. A mixture of traditional households, satellite dishes, and incidental oasis-type vegetation, looking out of place in the yellow-sand neighborhood, Yerbent is the primary and most significant settlement in the Central Karakum. Visit two other craters, having mud and water bubbling with gas coming out from underground. See the flaming crater and take some photos, then drive back to Ashgabat, and return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, May 08

Ashgabat



Begin the day with a drive to **Gokdepe Fortress** for a visit. This site includes the remains of the **Ancient Fortress Gokdepe** (Green Hill) and **Modern Mosque Gokdepe**. The Fortress was constructed only in 1869 - it is a significant place that played a major role in the history of Turkmenistan. It became the last Fortress on the way of Imperial Russia to Central Asia.

Continue the drive to a well-known local **private stud farm** to see horses and enjoy a **cooking class**. The farm has a one-story building, a sort of mini restaurant with a kitchen where cooking two simple Turkmen dishes - **gutaps**, a kind of meat or vegetable pies, and **dograma**, a dish cooked only by Turkmens that can be served with broth as a soup or dry as a main course will take place. The cook will explain and show us how the dish is made.

Then continue to **Kov Ata underground lake**, a natural monument established to protect Central Asia's most significant known colony of bats where you can swim. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, May 09

Ashgabat - Turkmenbashy



Transfer to the airport for our morning flight to **Turkmenbashy**, an important and busy port town formerly known as "Krasnovodsk," it was renamed in 1993 to mean "the start or spring of the Turkmen," and upon arrival, begin the drive east (4 hrs.) to **Yangikala canyons**, a rarely seen and little-known natural wonder. Spend some time exploring the land of the red canyons, enjoying the "Martian" scenery, and having a picnic lunch. Travel from the fiery red of Mars to the blinding snow-white of the moon, glance at the canyons, and set back off towards the Caspian shore, crossing boundless empty steppes of this region. Transfer to *Hazar Gami Hotel* or similar for check-in, enjoy the blue color of the "Khazar" sea, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, May 10

Turkmenbashy - Ashgabat



Enjoy breakfast and a free morning at leisure to enjoy the largest Salt Lake in the world, the "Caspian Sea." We may take a one-hour cruise along the shoreline on a boat (subject to availability). Head to visit the **city market** in or/and explore this coastal city named "San Francisco of Turkmenistan" - visiting the **city bazaar**, which is known for the fish section where we may hunt for famous Caspian Caviar and taste smoked sturgeon, the **Russian Orthodox Church**, and a **cemetery of the Japanese POWs**, contains the remains of all Japanese prisoners of

war (POWs) who died in Australia during the Second World War. This includes those involved in the Cowra Breakout, other internees, and those involved in the battle of Darwin. The land was ceded to Japan in 1963. Transfer to the national resort "AWAZA," then transfer in the late afternoon to the airport for our flight to **Ashgabat**, and upon arrival, meet and transfer to *Yyldyz Hotel* or similar for check-in, have a farewell dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, May 11

Ashgabat - USA



Transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".

Special Trip remarks:

Travelers joining this tour require a high level of flexibility and tolerance and willingness to go with the flow when things change. accommodation is at 4 & 5 hotels acceptable by western standards during the trip.*

Bathroom facilities along the way may be rather primitive and at times that will mean "in the wilderness". By joining this tour, participants are acknowledging their full understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions and are admitting that they are in good physical and mental health and are equipped with open mind, a sense of adventure and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope up with the tour.



Tour Cost (Land Only):

4 - 8 travelers \$6,495.00

10 - 12 travelers \$5,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$895.00

Price based on group size minimum of 4 participants and maximum of 10 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: ****



Tour Includes:

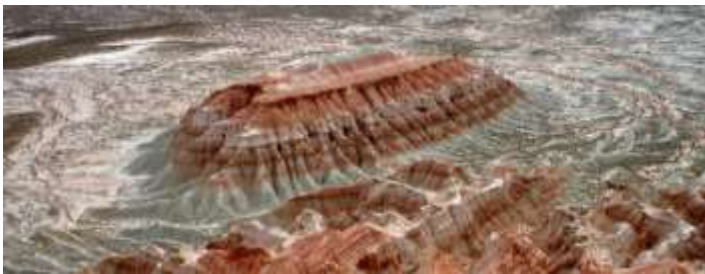
- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at mentioned Hotels or similar, 5* hotel in Ashgabat, 4* or best available outside of the capital.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Travel by modern a/c vehicles.
- English Speaking local guide.
- Water on the bus on touring days.
- Turkmenistan Visa invitation Letter.
- Ashgabat - Turkmenbashi - Ashgabat flights.
- All Tours as per itinerary & entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned.

Trip Grade:

II Active - Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides. Outside of major town, bathroom facilities are limited and not very clean.

Lodging Level:

★★★★ Superior - Outside of main cities, lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards (4 stars) while in Ashgabat and Turkmenbashi your hotel is a 5*.



Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA - Ashgabat - USA
- Turkmenistan Visa (obtainable upon arrival approx. \$145.00 or through Washington DC, currently \$45.00 - Subject to change).
- Beverages & alcoholic drinks with or without meals.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance (Highly recommended).

