



# Road to Samarkand

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**24 Days**

**Fully Inclusive from the UK**

Discover beautiful Islamic architecture, ancient cities and thriving open-air bazaars against a stunning backdrop changing from snow-capped mountains to spectacular deserts, tracing the Silk Road to the birthplace of Tamerlane.

### Fully Inclusive price includes:

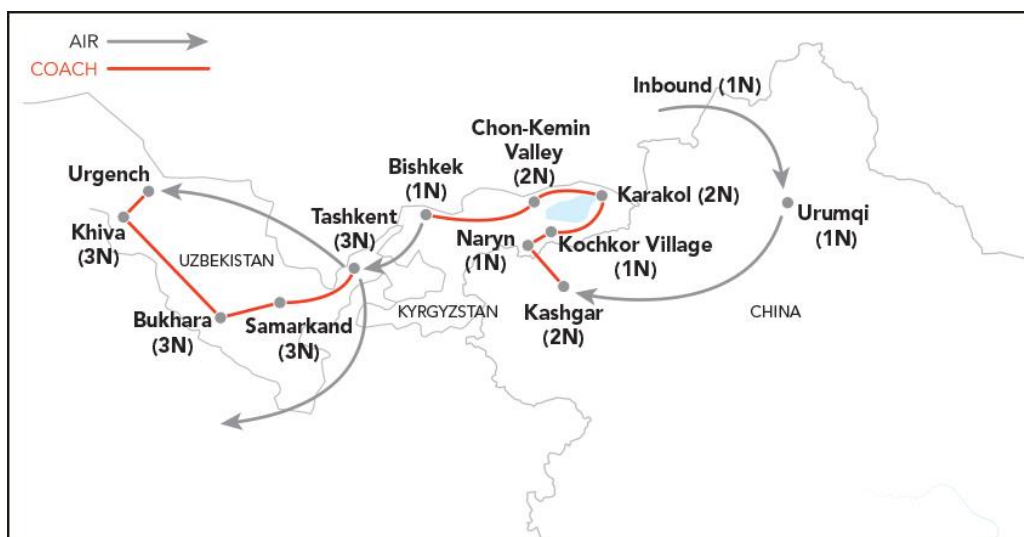
- International flights and current taxes
- Domestic transportation
- Accommodation
- All meals (excluding drinks)
- Touring with Guides and entrance fees
- Visa fees for UK passport holders

## Your Tour Dossier

This document is designed to be read in conjunction with the other pre-departure information provided by Wendy Wu Tours including the tour itinerary as described in our brochure and/or website. It aims to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour.

If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation; they will be explained here.

All passengers must read this document to ensure the itinerary is suitable for their interests and physical capabilities. This is not your final itinerary and therefore does not mention all the sites visited.



## Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

China and Central Asia continue to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to one country in Asia with us, then another, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in Central Asia requires patience and potential delays are to be expected due to standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout, so your local guides or National Escort will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding. It is essential that all passengers recognize the demands of factors such as basic facilities and cultural differences they may encounter in some areas.

## Road to Samarkand - Active Paced Tour

These tours can involve long periods of sightseeing on foot, climbing of stairs and getting on and off boats, and are physically more demanding. Some easy trekking may be involved, as well as travel to remote areas and areas of high altitude, reaching up to 3,750m. These tours could involve long days of driving and require a good level of fitness.

Sightseeing may involve walking and/or travelling over rough roads for extended periods. Our local guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

The more difficult aspects of this itinerary involve areas of high altitude, long driving distances. Travelling along the former Silk Road recreates the journey made by the caravans and horsemen for centuries – to experience the distance as well as the changing landscapes, faces and cultures as you move westwards. This itinerary covers an incredibly vast distance and involves longer drives. Tourist facilities are by no means perfect in this part of the country and travellers should be prepared for some degree of 'culture shock'.

*NB: Please note that times and distances listed in the tour dossier are approximate.*

### Days 1-2: UK - Urumqi

On day 2, you will be met at Urumqi Airport in the Arrivals Hall by your Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (approx. 1 hr drive) to your hotel. This evening a tour introduction will be held in the hotel. Food and drinks will not be served at this meeting. It is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling through China and Central Asia.

### Day 3: Urumqi to Kashgar

Kashgar altitude 1,130m

Drive 120km (1 hr and 50 mins) to Heavenly Lake. Change to an 'environmental bus' at the bus park to drive a further 10 mins up to the lake. You will be given the option to either enjoy a short boat cruise or a walk along the boardwalk along the shore. You will spend approx. 1 hr here, before returning to Urumqi. This evening transfer to the airport for your flight to Kashgar (flight duration 1 hr and 45 mins).

### Day 4: Kashgar

Kashgar altitude 1,130m

There will be easy paced sightseeing today made up of walking during the morning and in the afternoon touring by bus. Please watch your valuables within the market streets near Id Kah Mosque. *Ladies should bring a scarf from home as you are required to cover your head at some attractions today.*

### Day 5: Kashgar to Naryn

Maximum altitude reached today 3,750m

Tash-Rabat altitude 3,050m

Accommodation – Guest House

We travel today from China into Kyrgyzstan across the magnificent Tian Shan Range (Heavenly Mountain range) that forms a natural divide between the two old rival cities. After breakfast, the adventure begins as we drive 180km up to the Torugart Pass (3752m), where we will cross the border. No photographs are to be taken at any of the checkpoints today.

The population of Kyrgyzstan is relatively small, roughly five million people with the main ethnic groups represented by Kyrgyz (approximately 62 per cent), Russians (approximately 14 per cent) and Uzbeks (approximately 14 per cent). The country is land-locked and shares borders with Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Over 90 per cent of the country is covered by often arid mountains, which separate its demographic and economic centres: the Chui Valley in the North and the Ferghana Valley in the South.

**[NB: Refer to your Tour Dossier for more information about today's border crossing.]**

The Torugart Pass was favoured by the trade caravans of the Silk Road and by the marauding horseback armies of Genghis Khan. Then came the 'Great Game' era, when the British and Russian Empires competed to gain influence and territory through Central Asia, so they could in turn influence natural riches of the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East. During this time, the Russians built the first modern road across this pass in 1905, making it the main border and trade route. However in the days of the USSR, the Torugart Pass became a highly sensitive security point, with the Soviets convinced China would use this route to invade. The local people on both sides were subjected to military restrictions on their movement, even around their own villages. This border tension has eased since the breakdown of the USSR, although even as recently as 1999, the Kyrgyz border was guarded by Russian frontier troops. They are now being replaced with Kyrgyz guards.

After crossing the border, we make our way to the Tash Rabat Caravanserai, which has been restored to all its glory. Then continue onwards to Naryn where we will stay overnight.

#### **Day 6: Naryn to Kochkor Village**

Maximum altitude reached today 3,030m

Kochkor altitude 1,800m

Accommodation – local home stay

This morning we drive north past the Song Kul and Kara Kajur rivers towards Issy Kul; the landscape here in eastern Kyrgyzstan is made up of dramatic valleys and high mountain passes. We will stop at the village of Kochkor and stay overnight in local homes here, experiencing the hospitality of the local culture. After a traditional lunch, you will be able to see how the traditional Kyrgyz wool carpets, called 'shyrdak', are made.

#### **Day 7: Kochkor Village to Karakol**

Please note that this marks a return to standard hotels.

Today we head to Karakol visiting the village of Bokonbayevo, located close to the south-eastern shore of Issy Kul, en route. Issy Kul measures at 170km long, 70km

across and has a depth of 695m. This stunning lake is one of the largest lakes in the world.

Explorers from the 19th Century marvelled at it, one calling it 'a blue emerald set in a frame of silvery mountains'. Enjoy lunch with a local Kyrgyz family before watching a demonstration of the traditional practice of eagle hunting.

This afternoon we continue to the Russian town of Karakol, where we will stay for two nights. Karakol was founded as a Russian military outpost in 1869; the population surged during the 1880s when thousands of Chinese Muslims (called Dungan in Kyrgyzstan or Hui in China) settled here, fleeing persecution in China.

The name of the town has alternated between Karakol and Przhevalsk several times over the past century. The Russian explorer, Nikolai Przhevalsky died here in 1888 of typhoid, while preparing for an expedition to Tibet, thus the city was renamed Przhevalsk in his honour. After local protests, the town returned to its original name in 1921, then again to Przhevalsk in 1939 and finally restored to Karakol in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union.

#### **Day 8: Karakol**

Jety Orguz altitude 2,200m

We recommend you wear closed shoes today for the visit to the animal market and take a warm jacket for the hike this afternoon. Early morning visit to the local market, the Chinese Mosque and the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral all at a comfortable pace. Ladies should bring a scarf from home as you are required to cover your head at some attractions today. The afternoon is spent exploring the Jety-Orghuz Gorge. Sightseeing in the canyon involves 3 hours of leisurely walking on a bush track. Although this is a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and will be walking over uneven ground at altitude. If you take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently otherwise you will need to wait on the bus.

#### **Day 9: Karakol to Chon-kemin Valley (Ashu Village)**

This morning you will visit Przhevalsky Museum and then drive 2 hours to Cholpon Ata for lunch. Sightseeing today involves approximately 1.5 hours walking over uneven ground. Leisurely sightseeing this afternoon, involves 1-2 hours on foot in the open air museum of petroglyphs and Cholpon-Ata town. Later, enjoy a gentle hike at Semenov Gorge, which will be followed by a 1 hour cruise on Issy Kul. Although this will be a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and be walking over uneven ground at altitude. All customers who take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently otherwise you will need to wait on the bus. It can get cold on Issy Kul so we recommend

you bring a warm jacket. Then drive to tonight's accommodation, located in Ashu Village (approximately 2.5 hours).

#### **Day 10: Chon-kemin Valley**

Today involves leisure hikes in the foothills of the mountain (approximately 3-4 hours on foot). All customers who take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently otherwise you will have time free at leisure at Ashu Village.

#### **Day 11: Chon-kemin Valley to Bishkek**

Bishkek altitude 760m

The driving time is approximately 6-7 hours to Bishkek with a visit to Burana Tower en route. It may be handy to have a small torch with you when visiting Burana Tower. Sightseeing here involves 1 hour walking and climbing the tower is optional as there are many steep steps and small enclosed spaces. Then continue to Bishkek (75km) and check into your hotel. This evening enjoy a brief visit to Ala Too Square and Oak Park before a Folklore Show with dinner.

#### **Day 12: Bishkek to Tashkent**

Ala-Archa altitude from 2,150m

Tashkent altitude 480m

Please note that this marks a return to average altitude.

This morning drive for approximately 1 hour (40km) to the Ala-Archa National Park, south of Bishkek and stop at the park's base camp. From here, your guide will take you on a 1 hour hike. Although this a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and be walking over uneven ground at altitude; during October the days are shorter and the afternoons much cooler, therefore your time walking through the National Park maybe limited. All participants who take part in this activity must be able to complete it independently otherwise you will need to wait on the bus. Option will be available to stay at the hotel for time at your own leisure. This afternoon transfer 1 hour to the airport for your evening flight to Tashkent, Uzbekistan (flight duration is 65 minutes). Tour participants are required to be at the airport 3 hours in advance as this is an international flight. Upon arrival in Tashkent you will need to clear Customs and Immigration and some delays can be expected here.

#### **Day 13: Tashkent to Khiva**

After breakfast enjoy a leisurely paced morning tour of Tashkent visiting the Chorsu Bazaar, the Crying Mother Monument and the Museum of Applied Arts. This afternoon transfer to the airport to board our flight to Urgench. Upon arrival, we drive a further 40 minutes to the ancient city of

Khiva, where we will be staying for the next three nights. Remainder of our day is at own leisure.

Khiva is a small city (population 40,000) which some archaeologists believe was founded around the time Christ was born and was said to have been discovered by Shem, the son of Noah. The town certainly existed by the 8th Century, as a minor fort and trading post on a Silk Road branch to the Caspian Sea and the Volga River. In the early 16th Century Khiva was made capital of the Timurid Empire, becoming a busy slave market and pivot of the khanate for the next three centuries until Russia wrested the region from Timurid grasp in the 19th Century.

#### **Day 14: Khiva**

Enjoy a tour today visiting the Kukhna Ark Fortress, the turquoise-tiled Islom-Huja, the Amir-Tur Medressa and the Tash Hauli Palace. These are all located within the walled inner town called the Itchan Kala, which was the first site in Uzbekistan to achieve recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1990.

#### **Day 15: Khiva**

Enjoy an excursion to the ruins of Elliq-Qala (approximately a 2 hour drive), north-east across the Kyzylkum desert. This was one of the earliest forts in the area, possibly dating back to the first Century, built as defensive structures against the marauding hordes from the north. We will also have lunch at a yurt camp below Topraq Qala, close to Ayaz Qala Lake. Return to Khiva for dinner.

#### **Day 16: Khiva to Bukhara**

This morning we check-out of our hotel and drive (9 hours) to Bukhara across the desert. Upon arrival we will check into our hotel for two nights.

Bukhara has a long history spanning 2,500 years and was an integral part of the Persian Empire for centuries. Within the city, there are more than 350 mosques and 100 religious colleges. Bukhara was part of what came to be called the 'Golden Road', the meeting point of the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road, and hence a great centre for commerce, religion and culture.

In 1913, James Flecker's poem '*The Golden Journey to Samarkand*' was published to acclaim (and a little controversy) in England and immortalised the ancient trade path between Uzbekistan's most significant towns, Bukhara and Samarkand – "For lust of knowing what should not be known.....we make the Golden Journey to Samarkand".

The city's most famous landmark is the Kalon Minaret, which dates back to 1127AD. It is said that when Genghis Khan attacked and destroyed the rest of the city, he left the minaret standing, supposedly because he was struck by its beauty.

#### **Day 17-18: Bukhara**

Over the next two days there will be sightseeing around the central city, with approximately 5 hours of leisurely walking around the sites each day. Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Bukhara.

#### **Day 19: Bukhara to Samarkand**

Check-out from our hotel this morning as we commence our 4-5 hour drive to Samarkand. We will have a late lunch at the hotel when we arrive, before checking in for the next three nights. The rest of the day is free at our leisure.

Samarkand, with a population of 400,000, is the second largest city of Uzbekistan. The real glory of Samarkand began in 329BC when Alexander the Great conquered and destroyed the nearby capital, Macaranda. According to local history, when Alexander first visited here he declared "I heard that Samarkand was beautiful but never thought that it could be so beautiful and majestic".

After Alexander's reign, the city fell under the rule of the Persian Empire, and became the capital of the Mongol Prince Tamerlane in the 13th Century.

The finest builders, craftsmen, philosophers and scientists were invited to Samarkand and the reputation of its refined civilisation grew until Samarkand was a city of legend and wonder along the Golden Road. From here the Silk Road diverged; east to China, south to India and west to Persia.

#### **Days 20-21: Samarkand**

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Before You Leave**

**Itinerary Changes** - The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in China are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Roads in China have generally been improved over recent years, but some road construction and/or weather conditions may still lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day to day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

**Visas** - A visa is required for entry into China. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. We will require your passport, completed visa application form, and 1 passport photo, taken within the last 6 months, to process your visa. We will require all this information 8 weeks prior to departure. As per our standard visa processing service, we will have your passport for at least 4 weeks. Any passports and visa applications that require an express 2 week service, or that are received in our office less than 6 weeks prior to departure will incur a £50 per passport express fee.

Over the next two days there will be sightseeing around the centre of the city, with approximately 6 hours leisurely walking on Day 20 and 2 hours leisurely walking on Day 21. Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Samarkand.

#### **Day 22: Samarkand to Tashkent**

Depart your hotel early this morning, drive approximately 5-6 hours (350km) to Tashkent for a late lunch. This afternoon, touring involves several hours on foot exploring the Khast Imom Complex and other historical sites such as Chorsu Bazaar and the Crying Mother Monument.

#### **Day 23: Tashkent**

This morning we explore some of the famous sights around Tashkent; wander through the 1966 earthquake memorial, Independence and Bunyodkor squares (the former Halklar Dustligi squares), visit the Russian style Alishedr Navoi Theatre and the Amir Timur Maydoni before exploring Broadway Street where we will see local artisans and painters.

#### **Day 24: Tashkent to UK**

This morning, be transferred to the airport for your flight back to the UK

#### **Land Only**

If you are travelling on a land only basis, then you will need to make your own way to the starting hotel in Urumqi on Day 2. On Day 24, you will checkout from your Tashkent hotel, and continue as per your own arrangements.

Please refer to the Wendy Wu Tours brochure and/or website for details on departure dates, prices, itineraries, inclusions and tour extensions available as well as full booking conditions.



In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Chinese embassy and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy in London. If this is the case we will notify you as soon as possible.

The Uzbekistan Consulate has implemented a **new online visa processing system** for all passengers who require a tourist visa to visit Uzbekistan. The visa for Uzbekistan is valid for 15 days from the date of entry (issued as per dates specified on visa form).

Please note that if you intend to arrive more than 24 hrs before your tour commences or intend to stay in China after your tour has ended and **you are NOT staying in a hotel** you will need to register with the local Public Security Bureau. If you are staying in a hotel, registration is done on your behalf as part of the check-in process.

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your local GP or a travel doctor for advice on vaccinations and travel health. [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) is a comprehensive website that you may also find useful.

**Climate** - Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

**Insurance** - It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

## What to Expect on Tour

**Development** - Although China and Central China are developing quickly, they still lack international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. For example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade; concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK. However, all of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense as well as refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

**Group Size** – All our group tours are guaranteed to run subject to a minimum number of 8 travellers and a National Escort will accompany each group of over 10. The maximum group size varies depending on the tour, but is usually no more than 28 passengers.

**Accommodation** - Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and China. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

You will be travelling through a rarely visited and undeveloped area of Kyrgyzstan for a few days; from the Chinese-Kyrgyz border to the shore of Issy-Kul. This is a remote area with villages, nomadic settlements, very small towns and little in the way of tourist facilities. We have designed this itinerary to use the accommodation offered by the CBT home stay project, staying in local houses/guest houses for a few nights. The CBT 'Community Based Tourism' project started in Kochkor Village, offering income to local families and guides while providing tourists the opportunity to stay with a local family, in their simple homes, rather than in run-down Soviet era hotels. It is not essential to bring a sleeping bag; bed linen is provided at each type of accommodation and is adequate for the night temperatures. You could bring a 'sleep sheet' insert to use under the linen, just in case, though it is generally not required.

## Electricity

When staying at local home stays, consider that it is possible that the supply may be unreliable. You will be able to recharge your batteries/electrical devices (cameras, shavers, etc.) at most places, if not all, but we recommend that you carry back up batteries for them just in case. We recommend you also bring a torch as a backup as well. If there is limited electricity supply, this will mean limited hot water supply. In hotels, plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the

power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

### Altitude

This itinerary visits several areas of high altitude. *If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this itinerary.* This itinerary spends a period of nine days (Kyrgyzstan) at a moderate altitude over 1,300m. The following parts of the itinerary have high altitude:

1. Driving over the Torugart Pass at 3,750m, visiting Tash-Rabat at 3,050m, pass through Ak-Bejit Pass at 3,282m and in Naryn at 2,040m
2. Driving through Dolon Pass at 3,030m
3. Hiking for 3 hours in Jety Orguz at 2,200m
4. Hiking in and around gorges of Issy Kul at Cholpon Ata
5. Ala-Archa National Park at 2,150m

AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) occurs in some people when they travel to altitudes over 3,000m. Mild symptoms of AMS include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hours at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen, you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately. It is recommended to drink more water, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks and avoid exertion after arriving over 3,000m.

Making sure you are well hydrated (by drinking lots of water and refraining from alcohol/caffeine) before and during the tour, as well as exercising to improve your aerobic fitness before you leave, are generally considered to be excellent ways to prevent or alleviate the severity of mild AMS. If you smoke, your doctor will probably also advise you to stop several weeks before your tour. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this tour.

### Local Guides

This itinerary will be travelling through three different countries hence it will not be possible to have one National Escort to accompany your group for the entire tour. In Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, you will have a National Escort (for groups with more than 10 passengers) and in China you will have Local Guides in Beijing and another from Kashgar to the border at Torugart Pass.

**Tipping** - As with most countries, tipping is a way of life in China. For our passengers' convenience we ask for a compulsory amount to be paid at the beginning of our group tours to cover tipping for guides, drivers, restaurant staff etc. Approximate tipping amounts can be found in our brochure and/or website; however exact tipping amounts will be stated in your final documentation pack.

**Meals** - Hotels and restaurants in this region are not generally accustomed to serving many western tourists, however by default tend to 'spice down' the dishes, due to the tourists they do service coming from Europe. The food is always local in style and derives from what is in season and harvested locally. Vegetarian only alternatives are not usually available in Kyrgyzstan but Uzbekistan restaurants are more flexible. There are always plenty of salads, vegetables and bread offered at most meals. In remote areas, lunch may be prepared as 'picnic style', by the hotel that morning, or your guides may organise a simple meal at a local restaurant. Lunch is the main meal of the day, with dinner usually a lighter version of lunch. **If you have food allergies or any other preferences** please make them known to your guide/s at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met, but no guarantees can be made. Long driving distances, road conditions or flight times may delay or alter your meal times which could mean a dedicated meal is replaced by those supplied on the aircraft.

If you like, you can bring some supplements with you from home. There are numerous small supermarkets and shops at every town and village along the way where you can buy odd items e.g. instant noodles, muesli and chocolate bars, biscuits, drinks, chips, cakes and lollies.

In China's Xinjiang Province, you will find the food is different to what is known as 'Chinese food'. Geography and climate means that there are few vegetables and wheat is grown rather than rice, therefore noodles and flat bread feature heavily. Book now on **0844 499 3899** visit **[www.wendywutours.co.uk](http://www.wendywutours.co.uk)** or see your preferred travel agent.

The most common dishes are mutton kebabs with *naan* (flat bread) or noodle soups with mutton. Chinese breakfast dishes include cold vegetable/pickle dishes, bean curd noodles, soups, *congee* (rice porridge), steamed buns with pork or sweet red bean paste and green tea. You may also be served fruit, a fried egg, or toast – although the bread can be very sweet and unlike the normal bread we have at home. Black tea and coffee can usually be requested. Fresh cow's milk is not generally available.

In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the cuisine is influenced by Middle Eastern and Turkic (or Mediterranean) dishes – yoghurts, dried fruit, legumes, fruit vinegars, or mild spices like cumin season the common dishes such as *lagman* (handmade noodles), *shashlyk* (kebabs), *naan* (flat bread) and *plov* (rice pilaf dish). Mutton and chicken are the only meats available in most areas and feature in most dishes. Local breakfast dishes include *naan* and *airan* (like sour cream), savoury noodles with vinegar and green tea. You may also be served a fried egg, jam, honey or toast. Black tea and coffee can usually be requested. Fresh cow's milk is not generally available.

Despite the Muslim culture, drinking alcohol is acceptable and expected in this ex-Soviet region, especially Kyrgyzstan more so than Uzbekistan. The most popular mealtime drink is *Chay* (green tea) and is available at most meals, usually straight but hosts may add a large block of sugar crystal to the pot, or even your glass! Black tea and coffee are not always served, but can usually be requested. Expect to be offered vodka (not included in your tour price) at every meal!

**Personal Expenses-** You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of £150 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

**Exchanging Cash** - Banks and hotel exchange desks in Beijing, Xian and Urumqi will normally recognise and accept cash in British Pounds. In other towns you will find banking facilities less reliable, or staff who refuse to deal with currency they are unfamiliar with. If you are bringing cash in British Pounds you will need to plan ahead for time spent outside those cities. Alternatively, cash in American dollars are accepted more often.

In **Kyrgyzstan** only fresh, undamaged US Dollars, printed after 2001 will be accepted for exchange. Very few establishments accept credit cards and traveller's cheques. There are only a handful of ATM machines in cities and none in rural areas.

Upon entering **Uzbekistan** any foreign currency that is brought into the country must be declared on a customs declaration form. This form will be either given to you on the incoming flight or you can pick one up in the airport Arrivals Hall. It is better to bring US Dollars for easy exchange. A few select ATMs can be found although do not rely on these as they can be unreliable. Credit cards are only accepted in some hotels and in a limited number of shops, therefore make sure you bring a sufficient amount of cash of different denominations.

**Optional Extras** - Our tours are planned to be as fully inclusive as possible. However, from time-to-time your National Escort or Local Guide may suggest optional tours/sightseeing in addition to the standard sightseeing planned for that city. Such options are at an additional cost, with prices ranging from 100-300 Yuan per person (payable in local currency). If you do not wish to take part in any optional extras, you will have the option of enjoying some free time at leisure or to return to the hotel.

#### **After Your Booking**

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form, help sheet, and a China travel guide. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, badge, lanyard, suggested packing list and a phrase book, along with your final itinerary and international etickets.

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