

The 4 Stan-s - Central Asia In-depth: Important information

Who is this tour suitable for: This tour combines cultural sightseeing and soft adventure. It includes some light hikes (no more than 2-hour walks) and optional horse riding. While experience in trekking or horse-riding is not necessary, some parts of this tour are best enjoyed by relatively active people in good physical condition.

Accommodation:

- **Hotels:** We do our best to book hotels with central location and enough restaurants nearby. However, due to the budget to mid-range category of this trip, it is not always possible and some of the hotels might not be in the centre of the city. In such cases, you can count on your tour leader to help with taxi arrangements and recommendations.
- **Yurt camps (Kyrgyzstan):** Single/double/twin room accommodation is possible only in the hotels. During this tour you will stay in yurt camps, where you will share a yurt with up to 4 people. Keep in mind that the bathroom facilities are basic in some of the camps and you need to bring your own towel and toiletries. Some of the yurt camps are located high in the mountain in some of the most remote parts of the country. That means that they might be lacking some conveniences, like internet connection and/or full time electricity. Be prepared that in the yurts, the electricity might be regulated by your host. Keep in mind that the weather might be much colder in the mountain and might change quickly, so make sure you bring enough warm clothes. Most of the camps are owned by local semi-nomads and you will be able to experience this unique culture and lifestyle firsthand, in the most authentic way possible.
- **Home-stay:** There is one overnight in a home-stay in a remote village in the picturesque Chon-Kemin valley. In the home-stay, you will share a room with up to 6 people. Staying in a local home-stay allows you to immerse yourself in the local culture and get to know more about life in the village.
- **Sleeper train:** If your itinerary includes a night on a sleeper train, keep in mind you will be accommodated in a 4-bed sleeping compartment. You might need to share it with locals or be on an upper bed. You will be provided clean sheets for your bed.

Money: Bring enough cash in USD for the whole duration of the trip. The USD is the easiest currency to exchange. It is recommended that you have small amount of both Kazakhstani Tenge and Tajikistani Somoni, as it might be difficult to find exchange places soon enough after border crossing. Most places in the bigger cities accept payments by card. Mastercard is not as widely accepted as Visa and you might have some issues with making payments or withdrawing cash if you use Mastercard (especially in Tajikistan).

Food: You can find both international and local restaurants in the bigger cities, however food choices might be limited in the countryside (half of the itinerary). Breakfast is included in all of the accommodations, but it may vary in options and style in the different spots (continental style breakfast is

not available in all of them). It is not recommended to drink tap water.

Language: All of the countries on this itinerary are Russian-speaking. English is also widely spoken in the big cities.

What to pack: This itinerary covers a huge territory, varying in climate and elevation. Be prepared for colder weather in the mountains, as well as high temperatures in some places. It's recommended to bring enough warm clothes for 2-3 days as temperatures in the mountain might reach around 0°C. Bring a headscarf to cover your hair and shoulders for the days that include mosque visits. Men need to wear long trousers and T-shirts covering the shoulders on such days. Bring enough sunscreen and umbrella and be prepared for higher temperatures in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where they might reach up to 35°C. Bring your own towel and toiletries during the yurt camp stays.

Visa requirements: It is your responsibility to make sure you have all necessary visas for the countries visited. Please check with your local authorities if visa is necessary and make sure you have your visa well in advance before the start of the trip. Penguin Travel can provide you with information for accommodation and local contacts if they are required for your visa. Please keep in mind that Penguin Travel has no responsibility for your visa applications being accepted on time or rejected.

Roaming and local SIM cards: Local SIM cards are available in all of the countries with accessibility varying in the different countries. The prices are about 2-4 USD. Keep in mind that the process of getting and activating a local SIM card might take up to 20 mins. You are advised to arrange it in the free time in the big cities and not during the city tours.

*Penguin Travel reserves the right to make changes to the itinerary due to bad weather conditions or any other unforeseen circumstances.