



TURKMENISTAN TOUR (MAY)

TOUR

May 11th - 18th / 20th 2024
7-9 Nights

OVERVIEW

Join experts in Turkmenistan travel, Koryo Tours, on this epic journey to Central Asia's most enigmatic and least-visited country; Turkmenistan.

We will see history unfold as we travel from ruined ancient cities to gleaming modern marble-clad towers. From flaming pits deep in the desert to deep subterranean pools of health-infusing water. We will make sure to visit the main sites during our time in Turkmenistan such as [Ashgabat](#) and the [Darvaza Gas Crater \(Gates of Hell\)](#), but also take you off the beaten path to really experience and understand Turkmenistan. Meet local people, learn about their lives and history, their differences and commonalities.

We look forward to sharing it with you in Turkmenistan!

This tour will be led by our Destinations manager and travel specialist **Rich Beal**, who first travelled to Turkmenistan more than ten years ago. Over many trips, he has made close friends there, explored widely, and maintained a deep interest in the country and region. Rich now lives in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia - the perfect home for his many forays into the Central Asian region. You can rest assured that you will be in safe hands during your Turkmenistan tour and that you will get the most out of your trip into this unexplored land!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ashgabat - All the highlights and local colour
- Darvaza Gas Crater - The 'Mouth of Hell'
- Kow Ata Underground Lake - Natural hot spring 80m under the ground
- Nisa Fortress - UNESCO listed archaeological site
- The Ancient ruins of Konye-Urgench

Please note that the itinerary may differ slightly to what is below but your tour leader will do their best to ensure that as much is covered as possible and will also add in extras when there is time such as a visit to a local bar or a funfair. We will make the most of your time on the tour to guarantee the experience of a lifetime.

The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.

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MAY 11th – SATURDAY (ARRIVAL DAY – ASHGABAT)

- [Assemble in Ashgabat](#) - Airport pickups will be arranged wherever you fly in from and we will have a group dinner to get introduced and start the adventure!

Meals: **Dinner**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat - Built for the 2017 Asian indoor martial arts game this well-located and modern hotel allows access to malls, shops, restaurants, and provides guests with quality facilities in a fascinating part of the city

MAY 12th – SUNDAY (ASHGABAT)

- **Tolkuchka Bazaar** - The nation's largest market, built outside the city and home to various sections selling household goods, clothes, the famous Turkmen carpets, camels & other animals, and much more!
- **Ashgabat Hippodrome** - Sunday is a day at the races, with the sacred Ahal-Teke horses in full display.
- **Afternoon city tour** including Independence Park and Monument, Arch of Neutrality topped by the gold statue of Turkmenbashi, Ahal-Teke Horse Monument, Earthquake Monument and Museum.
- This evening is free for further exploration of Ashgabat.

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat

MAY 13th – MONDAY (DARVAZA GAS CRATER & BOKHURDAG)

- **Desert adventure!** We head off in a fleet of 4x4s into the deep desert today.
- **Bokhurdag:** This Semi-nomadic village affords us a great look at what desert life is like today. The visit here is made even better as we enjoy lunch in a local family home.
- Onwards to the bizarre mud and water craters, scenes of accidents that opened sinkholes in the desert.
- Finally, we arrive at the stunning and unforgettable [Darvaza Gas Crater](#) in the centre of the country and the scene of a 40-year-old industrial accident

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that ended with a giant flaming pit burning to this day. A hypnotic sight and one of the strangest and most spectacular things you can see.

- We camp tonight beside the crater; it is best seen at night. Dinner cooked on the spot.

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Overnight: Camping at the Darvaza Gas Crater - Camping in the desert with tents, sleeping bags and roll mats provided. We will also provide tents based on your rooming options. Camping affords us the best opportunity to view the fantastic gas crater from before sunset to sunrise.

MAY 14th – TUESDAY (ASHGABAT)

- We return to Ashgabat, driving through the morning with a stop at a [monument to the Soviet defeat \(or suppression\) of the Basmachi Rebellion](#), guerillas who resisted first Russian Imperial and then Soviet rule in Central Asia.
- Once back in the capital the rest of the day is yours to do with as you please; explore, relax, shop, take a side-trip (drivers are available for hire), we and our local guides can advise on the spot.

Meals: **Breakfast**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat

MAY 15th – WEDNESDAY (DASHOGUZ & KONYE-URGENCH)

- We take a morning 1-hour flight from Ashgabat to the northern city of [Dashoguz](#), in the Uzbek-majority part of the country.
- We'll see the local bazaar and a taste of life in this very different city.
- The ancient silk road ruined city of [Konye-Urgench](#), ravaged by successive invaders over the centuries and now home to minarets, impressive mausoleums, and all manner of historical tales and stories – one of the most important sites on the old silk-road.

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Overnight: Hotel Uzboy, Dashoguz - This local hotel may be basic although there are not many options in this far-flung town. It does offer us the chance to walk out into the local streets and experience life away from the marble city of Ashgabat.

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MAY 16th – THURSDAY (ASHGABAT & KOW ATA)

- We'll fly back to Ashgabat and get on with some more touring activities straight upon arrival.
- Ahal-Teke horses considered as heavenly and sacred beasts in Turkmenistan; this stud farm visit will show you why. Have a ride on one of the horses if you like.
- We then drive on to the bizarre [Kow-Ata underground lake](#). A Sulphur-heated lake 100m deep underground. Take a swim, explore the cave, and then have lunch at a shashlik restaurant on the spot.
- After lunch, we will visit a couple of large mosques; first, the Geok Deppe Mosque, built on the site of a late 19th Century massacre that marked the beginning of Russian dominance in the region.
- Then we see the even more massive Gypjak Mosque, built on the site of the 1949 Earthquake that devastated the city; this is also home to the Turkmenbashi Mausoleum which we will visit.
- Back to the city for a relaxing evening before beginning the final day of this adventure!

Meals: **Breakfast, lunch**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat

MAY 17th – FRIDAY (ASHGABAT & KOPET DAG MOUNTAINS)

- Free morning in Ashgabat for any final shopping, wandering, or relaxing that you want to do, and then we meet for a packed last afternoon.
- **A cable car** ride into the Kopet Dag mountains to see a view of the city from above.
- The world's largest indoor Ferris Wheel – yes, indeed! A bizarre and quite fun trip to this oddity at the edge of town.
- An evening drive around the marble city, stopping at some viewpoints for some great photos of the nighttime illuminations which are very impressive.
- Final dinner of the tour, time for goodbyes and the last night out if you've got the energy!

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Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat

MAY 18th – SATURDAY (DEPARTURE DAY OR OPTIONAL EXTENSION)

Departure day

- Departure day – airport transfers provided for everyone regardless of the time of flight or where you are going

End of tour, OR;

OPTIONAL EXTENSION (+550 EUR)

Extension day 1: Mary & Margush

- Flight from Ashgabat to Mary, in the centre of the country and the nearest city to the ancient silk road metropolis of Merv.
- Visit **Gonur-Deppe** (Margush); another ancient city in this area, with some lovely extent architectural features.
- Back to **Mary City** and explore this modern town, mix with the locals, go to parks, bars, etc. as you like, a sleepy area with welcoming and friendly locals.

Meals: **Breakfast**

MAY 19th – SUNDAY (EXTENSION DAY 2: ANCIENT MERV)

- Excursion to **Ancient Merv**. Merv was once one of the most important cities in the world at certain times of its history. This ancient site is now a place where you will learn a great deal about the history of Central Asia, the rise and fall of dynasties and cities, the silk road, and human civilisation in this part of the world. Animals, travellers and archaeologists now roam the existing building, ruins, etc. All contribute to a sense of the dynamism of the ancient silk road.
- In the afternoon you fly back to Ashgabat for a final rest/night out before departure.

Please let us know if you wish to book an extra night in Ashgabat. The flight should return to the capital at around 8 - 9 PM.

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TOUR PACKAGE

INCLUDED

- Accommodation
- All internal transportation (flight, train, road)
- Local guide/translator
- All included sightseeing
- Entry fees
- Airport Transfers
- Koryo Tours Tour Leader plus local guides/translators
- An Amazing Experience!

NOT INCLUDED

- Tips for the local guides and driver (approx 10-15 USD per day)
- Incidentals (drinks, souvenirs, etc.)
- Optional single room supplement of 50 USD per night (not available on the train)
- Visa Fee - if applicable.
- Onward travel from Ashgabat - we can advise and assist with options though

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Please note that when on tour your day-to-day itinerary may differ to what is advertised above. However, your tour leader will ensure that everything available at the time is covered, and replacement options are provided where needed. We will also add extras when there is time (such as a visit to a local bar or amusement park).
- After the tour, we will send out a list of all participants' emails so you can keep in touch, swap photos etc. If you do not wish to be on this list, then please let us know.

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