



TURKMENISTAN TOUR (OCT)

TOUR

October 5th - 12th 2024
7 Nights

OVERVIEW

Join Koryo Tours this October for our Turkmenistan tour as the adventures continue. Turkmenistan is Central Asia's least visited country.

This means it may be a bit difficult to access and travel around, but it certainly doesn't have any less to offer! Join Koryo Tours as we explore the beautiful capital city [Ashgabat](#), camp over at the famous [Darvaza Gas Crater](#), otherwise known as 'the Gates of Hell', and be dazzled by the colourful desert canyons to the [Caspian Coast](#).

As we journey through the country we will see the serious and the sublime, the freaky and the frivolous – join us on this amazing adventure that we simply do better than anyone else. Koryo Tours have been working in Turkmenistan for over a decade. Over this time, we've built this special experience through dozens of visits and the best local contacts and relationships meaning our Turkmenistan tours are unrivalled in **quality, experience, and fun!**

We look forward to sharing it with you in Turkmenistan!

This tour will be led by one of our most experienced tour leaders, [Rich Beal](#). Rich has led tours all over the world since 2004 and has been leading [tours to Turkmenistan](#) for a decade (and to the rest of Central Asia much longer!). He is incredibly knowledgeable about the area and a great storyteller – ask and he will tell you plenty of fascinating travel anecdotes from his many adventures!

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

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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.

October 5th – 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, and restaurants and provides guests with quality facilities in a fascinating part of the city. Should the heat of the day prove too much you can quench your thirst in the rooftop bar or take a plunge in the included swimming pool.

October 6th – 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



October 7th – 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 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 besides 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.

October 8th – 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

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October 9th – WEDNESDAY (NISA FORTRESS & KOW ATA UNDERGROUND LAKE)

- **Nisa Fortress** - a UNESCO site and former capital of the mighty Parthian state in ancient times.
- **Ahal-Teke horses** are 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
- We will drive in our 4x4 fleet on to the remote city of [Balkanabad](#), this sleepy town is easily explored on foot in a couple of hours of free time before dinner and overnight in a hotel shaped like a giant yurt.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Overnight: Hotel Niebitchi, Balkanabat - Yurt-shaped curiosity in the centre of town, well-situated for wandering around and exploring.

October 10th – THURSDAY (YANGYKALA CANYON & TURKMENBASHI)

- We drive to the stunning [Yangykala Canyon](#), known as the ‘Turkmen Grand Canyon’ little-known but an absolutely beautiful area with shifting colours in the rocks, amazing formations, and some wonderful photos to be taken.
- Through the afternoon, we make our way across the country, stopping at scenic areas, pilgrimage sites and so on until we reach our destination: the Caspian sea city of [Turkmenbashi](#) and the bizarre ‘touristic zone’ of [Awaza](#). This place has to be seen to be believed, and we will have a look around the hotel-covered peninsular before checking in for a relaxing evening at the coast.

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Overnight: Serder Hotel. A comfortable beachside option. You can also upgrade to the Yelken Yacht Club, the finest establishment in Awaza. Contact us for more details!

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October 11th – FRIDAY (AWAZA)

- A free morning to relax at the coastal resort, try swimming (although the Caspian is a cold sea) or some watersports, wandering around, or even sleeping in!
- Late morning we will take a boat ride down a canal stretching the length of the Awaza area, see the different architectural styles of the buildings here, all of which have sprung up in the last few years.
- We will drive to **Turkmenbashi** city for lunch, the oldest city in the country and one settled by Russians during their invasion from across the sea during the late Great Game.
- A city tour of Turkmenbashi – the local bazaar, railway station, Oil Workers' Square, various monuments, and even a cemetery for Japanese POW's who were brought here to labour after their capture at the end of WWII, and never got home again.
- Flight back to Ashgabat for the final dinner of the tour, time for goodbyes and the last night out, if you've got the energy!

Meals: **Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat

Oct 12th – SATURDAY (DEPARTURE DAY or EXTENSION DAY 1)

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

Meals included: Breakfast



Oct 13th – SUNDAY (EXTENSION DAY 2)

- Excursion to ancient Merv, probably the most important city in the world at certain times of its history and 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 in general. This vast area is roamed by animals, explorers, extant buildings, ruins, etc. All contributing 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. Hotel not included.

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

Overnight: Olympia Hotel, Ashgabat



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 15-20 USD per day)
- Incidentals (drinks, souvenirs, etc.)
- Optional single room supplement of 55 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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