



TURKMENISTAN OCTOBER TOUR

TOUR

Sept 28 –October 5 2019
7 nights

OVERVIEW

Koryo Tours continues its amazing Turkmenistan adventures (since 2004) – On this epic journey to Central Asia’s most enigmatic and least-visited country 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, from colourful desert canyons to the Caspian Coast. Meet local people, learn about their lives and history, their differences and commonalities. 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 Koryo Tours simply does better than anyone else – we’ve built this special experience through dozens of visits and the best local contacts and relationships. We look forward to sharing it with you in Turkmenistan!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ashgabat - All the highlights and local colour
- Darvaza Gas Crater – the ‘Mouth of Hell’
- Kow-Ata Underground Lake – Natural Hot Spring, 80m below the ground
- Nisa Fortress – UNESCO-listed archaeological site
- Yangykala Canyon – the Grand Canyon of Central Asia
- The Caspian Sea city of Turkmenbashi, and the unique and weird Awaza Zone
- Extend the tour to visit the Capital of the Silk Road – Ancient Merv

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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DAILY ITINERARY

SEPT 28 – SATURDAY (ARRIVAL DAY - ASHGABAT)

- **Flights to Ashgabat**(airport code ASG) arrive from many international destinations – let us know which flight you will be on and we will arrange your pick-up and transfer to the hotel. Arriving even earlier is of course fine and can be accommodated
- Today we start the tour with a **group dinner** of some excellent local food, coordination and briefing session, before the adventure ahead!

Overnight: Ak-Altyn Hotel, Ashgabat. Situated in the pleasant and walkable old-town part of Ashgabat, with decent facilities and proximity to plenty of places to visit

SEPT 29 – 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 city monuments and a good look at the marble wonderland of Ashgabat
- Including **Independence Park** and Monument, **Arch of Neutrality** topped by the gold statue of Turkmenbashi, **Ahal-Teke horses monument**, **Earthquake Monument** and Museum
- Free evening for a night out in the city

Overnight: Ak-Altyn Hotel, Ashgabat

SEPT 30 – MONDAY (DARVAZA GAS CRATER)

- **Desert adventure!** We head off in a fleet of 4x4s into the deep desert today
- **Bokhurdag** semi-nomadic village for a look at what desert life is like today and lunch at 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 possibly see
- We camp tonight besides the crater, it is best seen at night, dinner cooked on the spot

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Overnight: *Desert camping.* camping in the dessert, tents, sleeping bags and roll mats provided. we will also provide tents based on your rooming options. this affords us the best opportunity to view the amazing gas crater from before sunset to sunrise

OCT 1 – TUESDAY (ASHGABAT)

- We return to Ashgabat, driving through the morning with a stop at a monument to the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion
- 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 give advice on the spot.

***Overnight:**
Hotel Ak Altyn.

OCT 2 – WEDNESDAY (KOW-ATA LAKE/BALKANABAD CITY)

- **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 a easily explored on foot in a couple of hours of free time before dinner and overnight in a hotel shaped like a giant yurt

***Overnight:**

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

OCT 3 – THURSDAY (YANGYKALA CANYON/CASPIAN SEA)

- 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 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

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***Overnight:**

Yelken Yacht Club - most relaxing and well-equipped place in the whole country. a great way to finish the day!

OCT 4 – FRIDAY (ASHGABAT/KOPET DAG MOUNTAINS)

- 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 a last night out if you've got the energy!

***Overnight:** *Hotel Ak Altyn*

OCT 5 – SATURDAY (DEPARTURE OR EXTEND THE TOUR!)

Departure

- 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

OCT 6 – THURSDAY (ANCIENT MERV – CAPITAL OF THE SILK ROAD)

Extension Day 2: Ancient Merv

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- 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.

Please let us know if you wish to book an extra night in Ashgabat. the flight should return to the capital at around 8PM - 9PM.. This one is very modern and it lined with some great examples of brutalist apartment buildings

End of Tour



TOUR PACKAGE

INCLUDED

- Accommodation
- All internal transportation (flight, road)
- Local guide/translator
- All included sightseeing
- Entry fees, permits
- 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 EUR per day)
- Incidentals (drinks, souvenirs, etc)
- Optional single room supplement of 50 USD per night (not available on the train)
- Visa Fee
- Onward travel from Turkmenistan - 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. Your tour leader will ensure, however, that everything available at the time is covered, and replacement options are provided where needed. We will also add in extras when there is time (such as a visit to a local bar or amusement park).
- We visit Turkmenistan regularly so know all the best places to go, and how to make the most of your days there to guarantee the experience of a lifetime.
- 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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