



# ACADEMY TRAVEL

TAILORED  
SMALL GROUP  
JOURNEYS

# KYRGYZSTAN & KAZAKHSTAN

## POST-TOUR EXTENSION

### OVERVIEW

Continue your journey through the Stans and discover the breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultures of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on this seven-day post tour extension.

This tour combines a captivating blend of history, ethno-culture, stunning scenery and natural beauty as we continue our exploration of the great Silk Road through these little-known Central Asian countries. Led by Christopher Bradley, along the way we enjoy the warm and welcoming Kyrgyz and Kazakh people, and observe the more recent influences of the Soviet Union upon their countries.

We begin in Kyrgyzstan, known as the “Switzerland of Central Asia”, exploring everything from colourful bazaars, political monuments and ancient minarets, to breathtaking lakes, treeless steppes and alpine wildflower meadows from our base in Bishkek. After time to understand the the nomadic culture of the Kyrgyz along Issyk Kul, we travel to Almaty, set in the foothills of Kazakhstan’s Trans-Ili Alatau mountains, and spend time driving through the stunning Charyn Canyon.

These fascinating countries will undoubtedly delight even the most experienced traveller.



### TOUR LEADER

**Christopher Bradley** has an honours degree from Liverpool University and specialises in the history and art of the Middle East.

### TOUR DATES

**June 2-8, 2024**

### TOUR PRICE

**\$3,920** per person, twin share  
**\$1,020** single supplement

### TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$500** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on the post tour extension.

### GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

### ITINERARY

Bishkek (2 nights), Issyk Kul (1 night), Almaty (3 nights)

### INCLUSIONS

**6** nights’ accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 1 dinner. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All internal economy flights. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



## DETAILED ITINERARY

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

### Sunday 2 June

#### Arrive Bishkek

Following our flight from Tashkent, we arrive in Kyrgyzstan's colourful cultural hub Bishkek in the late afternoon, before transferring to our hotel for an evening at leisure. Situated at the base of the Tian Shan Mountain range, this lively northern capital has a rich heritage and vibrant atmosphere. Overnight Bishkek

### Monday 3 June

#### Issyk Kul

We begin our adventure with a journey to the sacred lake of Issyk Kul, the world's second largest alpine lake and our base for this evening. Along the way we enjoy the serenity of the Kyrgyzstan countryside and visit one of Kyrgyzstan's oldest sights, the Burana Tower – an 11th-century minaret located in the breathtaking Chuy Valley. The tower is enveloped in ancient myth and is the last symbol that remains of the medieval city of Balasagun, which the Karakhanids built on the site in the 9th century. Here we explore the tower and small museum before wandering through the field of balbals, the mysterious carved stelae that are spread around the area. After lunch in a local guesthouse, we learn how to erect a traditional yurt before driving on to our final destination, the vivid blue waters of Issyk Kul, surrounded on two sides by spectacular mountain ranges. Overnight Issyk Kul (B, L, D)

### Tuesday 4 June

#### Cholpon-Ata & Bishkek

Our first stop for today is the 42-hectare open-air museum of petroglyphs at Cholpon-Ata. Here the landscape houses a plethora of stone circles, tombs, balbals, and a variety of petroglyphs, including some stunning snow leopards! The petroglyphs date from the 2nd millennium BCE up to the 4th century CE and it is thought that the site was once an open-air temple, where people worshipped the sun and other celestial bodies. After we have admired the stone inscriptions, we will continue back to Bishkek where we enjoy a tour of this Soviet-Asian flavoured city. We take in the 'Manas the Great' Monument and Ala-Too Square, along with the Kurmanzhan Datka Monument, celebrating an outstanding female tribal leader known as the 'Queen of the South', concluding our tour at Victory Square, which celebrates the victory over Nazi Germany. This evening is at leisure. Overnight Bishkek (B)

### Wednesday 5 June

#### Ala Archa National Park

The fresh alpine air beckons this morning as we put on our hiking boots and head to the stunning Ala Archa National Park. In the Kyrgyz language, Archa is a juniper tree and Ala

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### Burana Tower

The only remains of the ancient city of Balasagun, marvel at this ancient Silk Road minaret as snow-capped peaks loom in the distance and ponder the mysterious carved stelae balbals surrounding it.

### Stunning Issyk Kul

One of the world's few remaining ancient lakes, known locally as the 'Pearl of Kyrgyzstan', enjoy the serenity of Issyk Kul dominated by the spectacular Teskey Ala-Too range of the Tian Shan mountains.

### Ancient Petroglyphs

Discover the fascinating engravings and prehistoric monuments in the ancient stone garden of Cholpon-Ata, with more than 5000 stones reaching up to 3m in height.

### Ethno-Cultural Experiences

Immerse yourself in the rich blend of traditional and modern Central Asian cultures while watching a yurt installation, nomadic falcon demonstration and wandering the colourful bazaars of the Silk Road.

### Charyn Canyon National Park

Be awestruck at the natural beauty of Kazakhstan's Charyn Canyon, where deep gorges and colourful sandstone columns inexplicably appear from the flat steppes.





**Charyn Canyon**

## HOTELS

Hotels in Bishkek and Almaty are large and elegant with 5-star ratings. Our hotel in Issyk Kul is a 4-star property located in Bosteri and offers a private beach area and a bar.

### **Bishkek, Orion Hotel**

(2 nights, total)

### **Issyk Kul, Hotel Karven**

(1 night)

### **Almaty, DoubleTree by Hilton**

(3 nights)

## WEATHER

June marks the start of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan's summertime, with temperatures averaging 27°C. It is a great time for exploring the mountainous regions and admiring the stunning carpet of alpine wildflowers.

means multicoloured, so the name of the park translates to multicoloured juniper trees, which you will undoubtedly enjoy while visiting. According to Zoroastrian tradition, smoke from burning the branches was used to chase away evil spirits and cleanse the air! After enjoying the park's striking gorge, we follow the Ala Archa river back to Bishkek's famous Osh Bazaar where, 2000 years ago, merchants travelling along the Great Silk Road once sold their exotic goods. There is time for shopping and lunch in the twisting alleyways of the Bazaar before we meet again to head to the airport and fly to Almaty, the former Kazakh capital. Arriving late in the evening, we check in for a good night's rest. Overnight Almaty (B)

## **Thursday 6 June**

### **Almaty**

Today we wake up to the buzz of Almaty, Kazakhstan's cultural and historical hub, located at the base of the Tian Shan Mountains. In 1998, Almaty was given the official status as a 'special city' and today we explore its wonderfully unique treasures, including the 'Pearl of Kazakhstan', Zenkov's stunning Ascension Cathedral and Panfilov's Park. We immerse ourselves in the bustling Zeleny Bazaar and admire the Republic Square, also known as Independence Square, with its impressive presidential palace. Later we enjoy the remarkable scenery at Medeu Gorge and take a cable car to the Shymbulak resort, sitting an impressive 3200 metres above sea level! A highlight of this afternoon will undoubtedly be our visit to Sunkar falcon farm, where we witness the bond between the beautiful birds of prey and Central Asian nomadic hunters. To finish our day we enjoy the sunset over Almaty via the Kok-Tobe Hill cable car. Overnight Almaty (B)

## **Friday 7 June**

### **Charyn Canyon National Park**

This morning begins with a 3-hour drive to Charyn Canyon National Park, where the amber hues and varied shapes of the monolithic rock formations eventually come into view amidst the monotonous rolling steppe landscape. We first stop to view the Charyn Canyon, where the rock is dark enough to be called the Valley of the Witches. Our next stop is the so-called Valley of Castles, a scaled-down version of the Grand Canyon carved deep into the Kazakh desert. After exploring the vast rocks shaped by eons of time and natural forces we enjoy a picturesque picnic lunch on the banks of the mighty Charyn River, before heading back to Almaty for an evening at leisure. Overnight Almaty (B, L)

## **Saturday 8 June**

### **Depart Almaty**

Before departing Almaty this afternoon, the morning is at leisure to discover more of Almaty's hidden delights. You might like to visit some of the impressive museums or explore the shiny shopping malls before we say our goodbyes. In the afternoon we transfer to the airport for return flights home. (B)