

SARY- CHELEK

KYRGYZSTAN: RIDING BEYOND THE SILK ROAD

In association with Alexandra Tolstoy Travel

14 - 25 MAY 2027
Tour Leader: Vasily

FROM
£7,935
PER PERSON


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY

KYRGYZSTAN:
RIDING BEYOND
THE SILK ROAD

SARY-CHELEK

This 11-night camp-to-camp journey is designed for those willing to step beyond the familiar, to travel deeply into remote mountain landscapes and experience a way of life that has changed little for centuries.

At Alexandra Tolstoy Travel, our rides are not based from a fixed camp or lodge. Instead, we follow a true nomadic rhythm, travelling on horseback through the wilderness with a fully supported mobile camp that moves ahead of us each day. Combined with exceptional guiding and a high level of comfort, even in the most remote settings, this creates a rare balance of authenticity and ease.

Our journey begins in Bishkek before travelling south to the magnificent Sary-Chelek Nature Reserve, one of Central Asia's most beautiful and protected landscapes, accessible to only a small number of visitors each year. Here, we meet our local horsemen and begin our ride into the Chatkal Range of the Tien Shan mountains.

Riding through high mountain pastures, ancient walnut forests and wildflower-filled valleys, we cross remote passes and skirt alpine lakes, following trails used for generations by nomadic shepherds. Days in the saddle are balanced with time to absorb the landscape: long lunches, wide horizons and the quiet rhythm of life in the mountains.

Each evening, our private camp awaits. Carefully transported and set up in advance, it offers individual tents, a mess tent and beautifully prepared meals served at proper tables, a level of comfort rarely found in such remote terrain.

As the journey draws to a close, we return to Bishkek, carrying with us not just memories of extraordinary landscapes, but of a culture experienced from within.



12-Day Itinerary

Departing 14 May 2027

14 MAY LONDON / ISTANBUL

Suggested flights (not included): Turkish Airlines TK 1986 departing London Heathrow at 16.40, arriving Istanbul at 22.30.

15 MAY ISTANBUL / BISHKEK

Morning connection to Bishkek (TK 344). On arrival, transfer to the hotel and time to rest. Lunch at a local restaurant, followed by an introduction to the city with an English-speaking guide. Bishkek, set against the snow-covered peaks of the Tien Shan, is a leafy, spacious city with wide boulevards and open squares - a legacy of its Soviet past.

16 MAY BISHKEK / SUUSAMYR VALLEY

After an early breakfast, depart Bishkek by private vehicle (approximately 12 hours) to begin the riding journey. The drive crosses high mountain passes into the vast Suusamyr Valley, where nomadic families spend the summer months in yurts with their herds. Lunch en route. By evening, arrive at camp beneath a dramatic rock formation in time for dinner.

17 MAY KARA SUU

Meet the horses and local horsemen, who carefully match each rider with their mount. Ride out from the village through poplar-lined tracks into wide mountain landscapes with panoramic views. Camp beside a river under walnut trees, with the opportunity to swim and encounter shepherd families with their animals.

18 MAY KARA SUU / SARY CHELEK

Ride through orchards and flower-filled meadows into increasingly wooded terrain, climbing into the mountains. Picnic lunch en route before descending to camp beside a clear mountain river.

19 MAY SARY CHELEK / LAKE IRI-KEL

Cross high mountain passes with sweeping views over the valleys below. Descending into the Sary-

Chelek Nature Reserve, ride through orchards of wild apple and plum trees before reaching one of the park's seven alpine lakes. Picnic by the ranger's house, then continue riding to camp on the shores of Lake Iri-Kel. Time to swim in the lake. Two nights in camp.

20 MAY SARY CHELEK

A day exploring the lakes of Sary-Chelek, surrounded by dramatic alpine scenery. Lunch at a local chaihana (tea house) by the main lake. In the afternoon, ride across open valley landscapes with opportunities to canter.

21 MAY LAKE KARA-KAMYSH

Today takes us over the Kotorama Pass (2,446m) to Lake Kara-Kamish. The ascent is steep and narrow, with a short section taken on foot, before descending through dramatic rocky terrain to a high plateau. After lunch and tea in a local yurt, we continue riding to the shores of the lake. Here, we have the chance to watch a game of kok boru, the traditional Kyrgyz horseback sport. In the evening, we gather around the campfire for dinner, with music from a local singer accompanied by a komuz.



"I think I left a little part of my soul in this beautiful country"

EMMY MEIKLEJOHN



Itinerary continued

22 MAY LAKE KARA-KAMYSH / KARA SUU

Ride back towards Kara Suu, descending past a waterfall and through open mountain terrain.

Final evening in camp.

23 MAY KARA SUU / BISHKEK

Transfer by road to Bishkek. Lunch en route. On arrival, check in to the hotel. Dinner in a local restaurant.

24 MAY BISHKEK

A full day in Bishkek. Visit Osh Bazaar to explore stalls of felt rugs, spices and handmade goods, followed by time at the Historical Museum. Lunch in a local restaurant and a final dinner in the evening.

25 MAY BISHKEK / LONDON

Transfer to the airport for return flights. Suggested flights (not included): Turkish Airlines TK 345 and TK 1971 via Istanbul.



“After ten days...I was a changed person. I hadn't found myself exactly (I'm too far gone for that), but I'd fallen in love with riding and the nomadic life”

RACHEL JOHNSON

Your tour leader

Vasily Berezhnoy

Born in Kyrgyzstan, Vasily Berezhnoy is a seasoned guide with a deep-rooted connection to the country's mountain landscapes, rich heritage and local traditions.

For over twenty years, he has led expeditions throughout Kyrgyzstan, from the high peaks and remote valleys of the Tien Shan to some of the country's least-visited regions.

His exceptional local knowledge is matched by an intuitive understanding of the terrain and weather. A professional photographer, he also has a wonderful eye for capturing the people, landscapes and moments that make each journey memorable. Calm, adaptable and deeply knowledgeable, Vasily brings invaluable experience and perspective to every journey.



Price & What's Included

£7,935
PER PERSON

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT
£800

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily
- Soft drinks, water, beer
- Riding guides and equipment
- Backup team including a large truck and comfortable camping
- The services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Wine, spirits
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Tips for guides and support team
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 25/09/2026.



Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.





VISAS AND ENTRY

UK, EU, US, Canadian and Australian passport holders do not require a visa for stays of up to 30 days. Please check the latest entry requirements before you travel.



WHAT TO PACK

We provide a detailed packing list, as well as suggested reading list. Essentials include jodhpurs, riding boots with a good tread, layers, a warm jacket for evenings and a four-season sleeping bag.



RIDING EXPERIENCE

You should be happy walking, trotting and cantering, and prepared for around six hours a day in the saddle, with a two-hour break for lunch. The traditional Kyrgyz saddles are very comfortable, with soft pads, and our local team provide well-trained horses and full support throughout.



GUIDES AND SUPPORT

You will be accompanied by an experienced English-speaking tour leader and five local horse guides. Two backup vehicles carry a seven-strong support team who move and set up camp, prepare all meals and take care of day-to-day logistics.



TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

We are committed to responsible travel, supporting local communities and minimising our environmental impact. Guests are asked not to bring wet wipes, to use eco-friendly soap and to respect local customs, wildlife and the natural environment.



WEATHER

Expect warm days, with temperatures up to 25°C, in late spring and early autumn, with cooler mornings and evenings. Conditions in the mountains can change quickly, so be prepared for all weather.



ACCOMODATION

A mix of a comfortable hotel in town and atmospheric private camps in remote locations, with spacious British tents, padded camp beds and a mess tent for eating. Hot water for washing is provided in a separate shower tent each evening. Single rooms and non-sharing tents are available for a single supplement.



FOOD AND DRINK

Three cooks prepare fresh, from-scratch dishes inspired by Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Uighur and Russian cuisine. In the city, meals are taken at some of the best local restaurants. All meals, soft drinks and water are included, with beer and vodka provided in camp. Alcoholic drinks in the city are not included.

SARY- CHELEK

Kyrgyzstan: Riding Beyond the Silk Road

It starts with a conversation

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