

The Turkmenistan Traveller Tour

Turkmenistan Tour

Overview

This tour is a busy eight-day adventure in which we'll visit all of the must-see sites in fascinating **Turkmenistan**. We'll see the ancient, the modern, the natural and, of course, the surreal.

It's a must that we start in Turkmenistan's extraordinary capital **Ashgabat** and journey out from there calling at the wondrous city of **Turkmenbashi**. From here, we'll be sure to visit **Yangykala Canyon**, **Konye-Urgench** and a few other spectacular sites along the way. True to Absolute Nomads form, this is a full-on tour; one from which you may need a holiday once you've finished!



What's Included?

Included:

- Airport Pickup in Ashgabat
- Accommodation
- Included Meals (where listed)
- All Entrance Fees (where listed)
- Vehicles and Driver
- Local Guides

Not Included:

- Travel Insurance
- Spending Money
- Snacks and Drinks
- Extra Nights Accommodation
- Tips





Itinerary Overview

Check out the brief overview of our 'Turkmenistan Traveller Tour' – or scroll down to see an in-depth run through of each day of the trip.

- Day 1.** Arrival in Ashgabat
- Day 2.** Fly to Turkmenbashi and Visit Yangykala Canyon
- Day 3.** Depart Yangykala and Pass Through Balkanabat and Serdar
- Day 4.** The Stud Farm, Mosques & Fortresses of Geok Depe
- Day 5.** Free Day in Ashgabat
- Day 6.** Explore Dashoguz, Konye Urgench & The Darvaza Gas Crater
- Day 7.** Return to Ashgabat
- Day 8.** Departure Day



Day 1

Arrival in Ashgabat

We'll meet in Ashgabat and, after a hearty breakfast, it's out to visit the famed **Altyn Asyr Bazaar**, located around 30 minutes from the city. Also known as **Tolkuchka Market**, the bazaar can be a hive of activity with people selling everything from fruit and vegetables to camels and cars. Tolkuchka Market's smaller, older incarnation used to be located closer to the city's centre but was moved to its current location in 2011.

Altyn Asyr Bazaar covers over 160 hectares, houses over 2,200 stalls and shops, if all of that were not enough, Central Asia's largest market is designed so that, if viewed from above, its layout resembles the pattern of a Turkmen carpet!

Following the market, we'll journey back in time as we explore the archaeological site of **Old Nisa**. Once the royal residence of Parthian kings, this partly restored ancient site gives us a chance to look back through history. Just five minutes from Nisa is the **Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque** and **Turkmenbashi Mausoleum**, built in honour of former leader President Saparmurat Niyazov.

Although controversial, the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque is a fantastic construction which needs to be seen to be believed.

Upon our return to downtown Ashgabat, we'll visit some of those must-see structures and statues including the **Monument of Neutrality**, **Turkmenistan Independence Monument**, **Statue of the President Arkadag** and even the giant book known as **The Ruhnama**; we'll finish the day with a quick hello to **Lenin**.

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Grand Turkmen Hotel*

For more information about the accommodation on this tour, check out the 'Accommodation' Tab on the Tour Page.



Day 2

Fly to Turkmenbashi and Visit Yangykala Canyon

This morning we're up and out early as we board our flight to **Turkmenbashi**, one of Turkmenistan's major cities located in the far west of the country near the Caspian Sea.

Upon arrival in the city we'll soak up the local morning atmosphere as we take a stroll through the **Turkmenbashi Bazaar** hunting for a good deal on all kinds of oddities, alongside everyday Turkmens doing their morning shopping.

From here, we'll head out into the desert, stopping at **Yangisuv Canyons** for a picturesque picnic lunch before we continue our expedition to the **Yangykala Canyon**.

Translated as '*fire fortress*', it's a name that fits especially at sunrise and sunset when its many colours of white, yellow, ochre, red and purple seem almost otherworldly. We will make camp here, enjoying the scenery at its best while our team cooks up a meal to complement our splendid view.

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Camping*



Day 3

Depart Yangykala and Pass Through Balkanabat and Serdar

After a pleasant nights sleep under canvas at **Yangykala**, we're off once more into the wilderness of the Turkmen desert after enjoying a hearty picnic breakfast with our guides.

We've got a few destinations to explore today, the first being a photo opportunity at **Kemel-Ata** where the remains of foundations and tombstones of sheikhs from centuries past litter the landscape making for an eerie yet, strangely beautiful scene.

Our next stop is the provincial capital, **Balkanabat**, where we'll stop for a bite to eat and to mingle with local Turkmen before we climb back aboard our convoy and travel onwards to our overnight stop – the city of **Serdar**.

Originally the site of an 8th century fortress called **Kyzyl-Rabat**, the city's modern name derives from the Persian word for 'Leader' in honour of Turkmenistan's first President. Upon arrival, we'll check in to the Chinar guesthouse and get some well earned rest after our long journey.

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Chinar Guesthouse*

Day 4

The Stud Farm, Mosques & Fortresses of Geok Depe

We're up and out once again as we make our final push back towards the capital, **Ashgabat**. However, there's no shortage of stops to make on the way!

After a morning of driving we'll stop at the village of **Nohur** for lunch. It won't take long in Nohur for you to realise that the influence of the Soviet Union failed to penetrate too deeply into this part of the country and traditional life continues much as it has for centuries – a stark contrast to the modern marble metropolis of Ashgabat!

Locals tell tales that the flowers that grow here are from the very seeds stored in Noah's ark. Perhaps this is why Nohur is listed as one of the top 100 most romantic places of the world. Whilst at the village we will visit the ancient tribal cemetery and see some traditional silk weaving homes.

After lunch we'll hit the road again, this time stopping at **Geok Depe** for a visit to a local **stud farm** which breeds, what some call, the most expensive horses in the world – the **Akhal Teke**. Continuing on our exploration of Geok Depe we'll visit the **Saparmurat Hajji Mosque**, dedicated to the defenders of Geok Depe Fortress in 1881.

Finally, we'll return to Ashgabat and get the chance to put our feet up after a busy day of adventure!

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Grand Turkmen Hotel*



Day 5

Free Day in Ashgabat

Today you have free rein over the city of **Ashgabat**.

There's plenty to do around the city from resting to restaurants and from markets to museums. You'll be free to decide what to do and when to do it, although you can always ask your Tour Leader for their top recommendations to make sure you hit the highlights!

Included Meals:

Accommodation: *Grand Turkmen Hotel*



Day 6

Explore Dashoguz, Konye Urgench & The Darvaza Gas Crater

This morning we're once again leaving Ashgabat and heading out into the unknown! Well, not quite so unknown since our destination today, **Dashoguz**, has a population of over 200,000.

As our flight lands, we'll immediately head out into the desert in search the historical **Konye-Urgench**. Conquered by Arabs in 995, Konya-Urgench became the second-largest city after Bukhara and eventually the capital of the Samanid Empire.

Konye-Urgench went through a cycle of destruction and reconstruction after being attacked by successive invading armies, ultimately being left abandoned in the 1800s. While at the site there are several areas, including tombs and the **Kutlug-Timur Minaret** and **Kyrk Molla Hill**, that are real highlights.

From Konye Urgench, we'll journey on into the vast desert. It's from ancient civilisation to modern disaster as we approach our next stop – the **Darvaza Gas Crater**, commonly known as the **Gateway to Hell!**

This great gas crater has been burning since 1971, and as we'll arrive during daylight, allowing us to observe the transition from day to night as the night sky becomes illuminated by its continual blaze.

Camping next to this burning void, we will enjoy a delicious Turkmen BBQ prepared by our local crew.

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Camping*



Day 7

Return to Ashgabat

Finally, we're on our way back to Ashgabat, our expedition drawing to a close. But, not before we pass through **Yerbent**, a small village in the Turkmen desert centred around a Soviet-era monument dedicated to those who lost their lives in the **Basmachi Revolution** of 1931. This 5-metre stone tower is a poignant highlight in the midst of the vast desert.

Finally, we'll arrive back in Ashgabat to enjoy a farewell meal and recall stories from our adventure.

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Dinner*

Accommodation: *Grand Turkmen Hotel*



Day 8

Departure Day

It's departure day!

Ensuring you've packed your shoes, socks, and a whole lot of memories, it's time to bid farewell to each other, and to beautiful Turkmenistan.

Enquire with your Tour Manager for information on airport transfers.

END OF TOUR