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Urumqi
Turpan
Kuqa
Hotan
Kashgar
Tashkorgan
Kashgar

Discover the marvelous Xinjiang in this Silk Road discovery tour. Explore the unique Uyghur culture and past civilizations with a trip from Turpan to Kashgar, plus camel riding and camping experience in the Taklamkan Deserts. All amazing!

Type
Private
Duration
12 days
Theme
Overland
Trip code
XJT-02
Price
From £ 1,088 per person

Itinerary

This Silk Road discovery tour balances an overland trip from Urumqi to Kashgar and sightseeing in the splendid Karakul Lake. Endless scenery await to be discovered as you travel across the vast deserts in Xinjiang. Stop in the Taklamkan Desert to have a memorable camping experience and enjoy the sunset and sunrise. Added with a cultural visit in Turpan, where you will see many relics along the Silk Road. All together, learning about the history of this famous ancient trading route that still vibrant today.

Day 01 :
Arrive at Urumqi



Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province, is the entrance point of this memorable Silk Road adventure. Once you arrive at the airport or train station, your local guide will meet and assist you to the downtown hotel. The rest of today is left free, have a rest or explore **Urumqi Grand Bazaar**, which is regarded as the world's window in Xinjiang. The word "bazaar" means market in Uyghur language. Wander around here to see lots of stores selling ethnic handicrafts, carpets and dry fruits. Built in the traditional Moslem style, the buildings here show distinctive ethnic and folk culture.

Notice the clock time in Urumqi of Xinjiang is the same as Beijing Time, but there is 2 hours difference because of the longitude. You should adjust your rest and dining time 2 hours later as compared with that in mainland China.

Day 02 :

Urumqi City Tour - Drive to Turpan - Turpan City Tour

Start your trip by visiting the **Xinjiang Museum** in this morning. Considered as a research and collection center for relics in Xinjiang, this museum provides a great opportunity to learn about the past civilizations along the ancient Silk Road as well as the culture and history of Uyghur people. After, say farewell to Urumqi as you will **drive to Turpan**, an oasis city located in the southeast. The drive takes over 3 hours, and you will witness the largest wind power station in China along the highway.

As you arrive in Turpan, visit the **Karez Well**, an ancient irrigation system with a long history of 2,000 years. These wells are made up of vertical wells, underground canals, above-ground canals and small reservoirs. During your stay in the underground canals, you will find this place is also a perfect escape from the intense heat of Turpan. Next with a visit to the **Jiaohe Ruins**, which is currently the largest and oldest earth city in the world. The remains you see today was descended from the Tang Dynasty. Most of them are well preserved due to the high location and dry climate. At last but not least, head to the **Emin Minaret (Sugong Pagoda)** for a visit. It is one of the most famous Muslim pagodas in China because of its unique appearance.

Day 03 :

Turpan Tour, Take the train to Kuqa

After breakfast, drive to visit the **Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves** and learn about the Buddhism culture in this region. These grottos are located on the west cliffs of the Wood Valley of the Flaming Mountains. They were decorated by numerous murals and other art works created by the people from different cultures, depicting their daily life and religion. Afterwards, enjoy a majestic scenery of the barren, eroded, red sandstone hills in Flaming Mountains (no entry), visit **Astana Tombs**, a serious of underground graves situated on the Gobi desert in north of Gaochang Ruins. Here you will see two well preserved mummies and many precious historical relics discovered.

During the lunch time, **enjoy a traditional Uyghur lunch** in a local **village of Tuyuk Valley**.

Then drive to visit **Gaochang Ruins** (if time is allowed), an ancient city used to be one of the most important stops along Ancient Silk Road. Pursue the past glory of ancient Gaochang people by wandering around this city. Afterwards head to Turpan train station for the train to Kuqa (K9719, 15:37-22:25, about 7 hours). Upon arrival at Kuqa, to be met and transferred to hotel.

Day 04 :

Day trip to Kuqa Grand Canyon of Tianshan Mountains

Morning after breakfast, drive to visit one of the largest temple ruins that have been discovered in Xinjiang, the **Ruins of Subashi Ancient City**. This city was divided into two parts by Kuqa River. By witnessing the remains and archeological discoveries on the site, you will have a knowledge of the development of the civilizations in this region. Then continue the

travel to **Mystic Grand Canyon of Tianshan Mountains**, which is the result of wind and rain erosion on the russet rocks over millions of years. Spend couple hours to walk around here and take some photos before returning to Kuqa. Overnight at Kuqa.

Day 05 :
Kuqa Tour

Spend the whole day to visit several highlights in Kuqa. The first one is **Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves**, which is regarded as the earliest Buddhist art treasure trove in China. It holds a significant position in Buddhism and in the history of Kuqa because of its corridor of murals. Afterwards, drive to the **Kizilgaha Beacon Tower**, built almost 2,000 years ago as the alarm tower for the frontier guards. The tower is in rectangular shape, and on the top you will see a watch cabin which remains of wooden fence.

In the afternoon, drive back to Kuqa city to visit the **Grand Mosque**, the second largest mosque in Xinjiang. The highlight of the mosque is the Great Praying Hall, which can accommodate 1,000 prayers. It is supported by 88 pillars that embellished with carved designs and in many colors. Next, roam the **old town of Kuqa** and experience the lifestyles of the locals. Overnight at Kuqa.

Day 06 :
Drive to Hotan along the Desert Highway through the Taklamakan



Leave for Hotan this morning. You will drive along the new G21 highway and then enjoy the unique scenery of the deserts along the G580 desert highway, crossing through the Taklamakan in Xinjiang. The drive is long (about 8-9 hours/650km), and you will arrive in Hotan this evening. Upon arrival, get settled into the hotel and prepare for the next day.

Day 07 :
Hotan Day Tour & Desert Camping

Explore the **traditional paper making** technology in Hotan this morning. According to the history record, this handicraft was practiced more than 100 years earlier than Ceylon's invention of modern paper. The raw materials for this paper consists of the bark of mulberry tree branches, and at present, there is only one family in Hotan still produces such paper. Afterwards, drive to the **Yorung Kash** (White Jade River) to see how local people look for jade. If you are interested in the local jade or silk products, go to the market in search of some good bargains.

For the lunch, it is a good idea to taste some Hotan local snacks. In the afternoon, head to the boundless **Taklamkan Desert**, the second largest shifting-sand desert in the world. In local Uyghur language, Taklamakan means "The desert which buried some places under". Spend the whole afternoon to **ride a camel cross the sand dunes** here and enjoy the magnificent scenery of the **sunset** in the desert. This night you will camp in the desert, we provide the best camping equipment, and the food, water, fruit for the dinner.

Day 08 :
Drive to Kashgar via Yarkand

Catch the splendid **sunrise in Taklamakan Desert** in the early morning. Watch the sun slowly clears the horizon and the shadow. Witness the colors gives way to the intense clarity of desert light. Remember to use your camera to record this awe inspiring scene. Afterwards, say farewell to Taklamakan and drive to Kashgar. Stop in Yarkand to visit some attractions of this ancient city. First head to the **Golden Graveyard**, where buried the royal family members of the Yarkand Uyghur Kingdom. Then move to **Tomb of Aman Nisahan**, who was the wife of the second king of the Yarkand Kingdom. Yet what made her famous were her poets and her transcription of the Twelve Mukam of famous traditional Uyghur music. Learn about her

folktales from your local guide during your visit here. Afterwards, take a walk around the **Yarkand Old Town** to see the local customs and lifestyles, and do not miss out on **a visit to the knife factory** in the "knife town" of Yengisar before you drive to Kashgar.

Day 09 :

Drive from Kashgar to Tashkorgan via Karakul Lake



Today you will visit the enchanting **Karakul Lake** on the drive from Kashgar to Tashkorgan.

Set out from Kashgar this early morning, and drive along the Sino Pakistan Karakorum Highway. Stop at the **Opal Village** for a short break after one hour of driving, then finally enter the Kunlun Shan Mountain range, one of the last truly unexplored places on earth. Enjoy the surreal glacier scenery along the way before you arrive at the Karakul Lake.

Lying at the foot of Mount Muztagata, **Karakul Lake** is so clarity as you will clearly see the reflection of the snow capped mountains surrounding the lake in the water. Walk on the grassland with roaming flocks and herds along the shore of the lake. Visit a local Kyrgyz family to experience their customs and culture in this afternoon. Afterwards, drive about 1.5 hours to Tashkorgan for overnight.

Day 10 :

Tashkorgan Tour, Drive back to Kashgar

Start today with a visit to the **Stone Fort** located in the north of Tashkorgan. It was once a bustling city since it was built at the junction of the middle route and southern route of the ancient Silk Road. At present, the remaining city wall still can be recognized clearly. Afterwards, spend couple of hours to savor the beautiful scenery of the surrounding **Tashkorgan Grassland**. See the magnificent Mount Muztagata and Pamir in distance. In the late afternoon, drive back to Kashgar city and prepare for the next day.

Day 11 :

Kashgar City Tour

Spend today to walk around the downtown of Kashgar and visit several highlights, Abakh Khoja Tomb, Sunday Market and Id Kah Mosque. **Abakh Khoja Tomb** is the final resting place for five generations of the Apak Khoja family, including what is purported to be the body of Xiang Fei, a famous concubine in Qing Dynasty. Notice the pillars in the Tomb which decorated beautifully and designed perfectly while visiting here. Next with a walk around the famous Sunday Market, which is jammed with many small shops for selling numerous commodities, traditional scarves, leathers, clothes, and knick-knacks. This market attracts numerous merchants from all over Xinjiang plus nearby countries such as Pakistan and Kirghizstan.

In the afternoon, after wandering in the Kashgar Old Town, visit the **Id Kah Mosque**, the largest and busiest one in China. The mosque is located in the heart of Kashgar city. Be impressed by the old Islamic architectures with strong ethnic style and religious features. See numerous worshippers coming from different places of Xinjiang. End the tour today with a visit to the Handicraft Street. You will **have the dinner tonight with a local Uyghur family**.

Day 12 :

Departure from Kashgar



Say farewell to your guide and drive this morning as they will pick you up from the hotel and drive to the airport or train station for departure. If you wish to continue your travels, we are experts in tailor made trips and ready to assist you in extending your stay in China.

Inclusions

Tour notes:

Please note prices are based in CNY.

General inclusions:

2 bottles of mineral water provided daily.

All required government taxes and fees.

Your selection of 3, 4 or 5 Stars hotel (shared twin room, private bathroom and daily breakfast)

The hotel accommodation is based on two persons sharing one standard twin room with private facilities in all relevant locations. If a single client requests a twin room alone, the single room supplement will be charged.

All entrance tickets as noted in the tour's itinerary.

Guide fluent in English, Chinese or Japanese that is certified by the state tourism build and from the local community. (If your native language is not listed please let us know, we are certain we can assist your needs.)

Airport and/or train station pick-up and drop-off.

All domestic flight and train tickets. Economy-class for flights and soft sleeper / seat for train tickets.

Transportation will be provided via a comfortable and clean car, minivan or tourist bus depending upon the groups size.

Meals as remarked in the itinerary. (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)

General exclusions:

Personal expenses such as laundry, drinks, internet access, fax, telephone calls etc.

Tips for your guide and driver.

Optional Attractions that are not specified in the itinerary.

Flight and/or railway ticket(s) to the first city of the tour and departure from the last city of the tour.

Meals not specified in the itinerary.

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