

TURKMENISTAN

On the Silk Road



FOR TRAVEL ACADEMY MEMBERS ONLY

11-18 May 2025



TRAVELLING WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER
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TRAVEL  **ACADEMY**
CLUB GREAT VOYAGEURS

TURKMENISTAN - On the Silk Road

May 11–18, 2025

8 Days / 7 Nights

The territory of modern Turkmenistan was traversed by the most stable overland route of the Silk Road, which continued to be used by camel caravans for centuries, even after the fall of the Roman Empire. Goods traveled in both directions, along with ideas. On these lands, once conquered by Alexander the Great, classical culture was joined by Islam and its art. Thanks to the income from taxes paid by passing merchants, imposing monuments were erected, which are now protected by UNESCO and will be the focus of our visit.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Sunday, May 11

Departure with a flight to Ashgabat.

Day 2 - Monday, May 12 -ASHGABAT

00:20 Arrival in Ashgabat and completion of customs formalities.

MEETING WITH OUR GUIDE: An Italian-speaking guide will accompany you to the hotel (reserved bus for those choosing recommended flights). Check-in and access to rooms.

09:00 Breakfast

10:00 Guided tour of the Turkmen capital, including the impressive Ertogrul Gazy Mosque with its fascinating interiors, the Independence Park with its beautiful statues, and the Arch of Neutrality. We will then visit the National Museum to learn about the intriguing history of the country.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we will travel 10 km to visit the ancient city of Nissa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located on a plateau near a hill. This city, the capital of the Parthian Empire, was founded in the 3rd century BCE. We will explore the archaeological areas and the ancient fortress.

We will also visit the Turkmenbashi Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia, boasting the largest dome in the world, and its mausoleum.

Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight stay.

DAY 3 - Tuesday, May 12

ASHGABAT – MARY – ASHGABAT

05:00 Transfer to the airport

06:20–07:00 Domestic flight to Mary

Embark on SUVs to visit Gonur Depe, an extraordinary 55-hectare archaeological site inhabited by Indo-Iranian peoples in the 2nd century BCE. Discovered by Greek-Russian archaeologist Viktor Sarianidi, it features a palace, a fortified mudbrick enclosure, and several temples with fire altars, possibly dedicated to Zoroastrianism.

Picnic lunch (cold dishes) organized by our local correspondent, followed by a visit to Merv, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Merv was one of the most important cities along the Silk Road from Alexander the Great's time until its destruction by the Mongols in the 13th century CE.

Now an archaeological park, Merv includes a series of cities from different eras: Erk-Kala (6th century BCE), Gyaur-Kala (3rd century BCE), Soltan-Kala (8th–11th century CE), Abdullahan-Kala, and Bayramalihan-Kala (15th century CE). Key monuments include the Great and Small Kyz-Kala (6th–7th century BCE), the splendid Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar (12th century CE), and the Mausoleum of Muhammad ibn-Zayd (12th century CE).

18:00 Transfer to the airport

19:35–20:05 Domestic flight to Ashgabat

Transfer to the hotel, dinner, and overnight stay.

DAY 4 - Wednesday, May 13

ASHGABAT – TURKMENBASHI – ASHGABAT

05:00 Transfer to the airport

06:30–07:30 Domestic flight to Turkmenbashi

Board 4x4 vehicles and head to the Yangikala Canyons, crossing the Balkan Mountains. Along the way, encounter camels and shifting sand dunes. Upon arrival, marvel at the breathtaking canyons, with coral-pink rocks at the base and white hues near the top.

After a picnic lunch, continue exploring the highlands and captivating Yangikala and Yangisuw Canyons, a journey through landscapes shaped over 5 million years by the ancient Paratethys Sea. The vivid formations and varied terrain make for a challenging but rewarding adventure.

Continue to Awaza for dinner on the Caspian Sea coast.

20:00 Transfer to the airport

21:20–22:20 Flight back to Ashgabat

Return to the hotel and overnight stay.

DAY 5

Thursday, May 14 - ASHGABAT – DARWAZA

After breakfast, enjoy a free morning in the capital.

Lunch at a local restaurant (included), then depart in 4x4 vehicles to the Karakum Desert. Known for its distinctive basins separated by wind-formed dunes called "takyr," the desert features limited vegetation such as saxaul shrubs and sand acacias.

Visit the intriguing nomadic village of Erbent before continuing to the famed Gates of Hell, a man-made crater created in 1971 when drilling for oil caused the ground to collapse. To prevent methane from escaping, the crater was set alight and has been burning ever since.

Barbecue dinner and overnight stay in tents at the Darwaza Camp (hotel room in Ashgabat remains reserved).

DAY 6 - Friday, May 15

DARWAZA – KUNYA URGENCH – DASHOGUZ – ASHGABAT

After breakfast, depart in 4x4 vehicles for Dashoguz and Kunya Urgench, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (approx. 320 km, 9 hours).

This site was the capital of the Khwarezmian Empire from the 8th to the 13th century. Highlights include:

Mausoleum of Turabeg Khanum (15th century)

Kutlug Timur Minaret (11th–14th century), the tallest in Central Asia

Mausoleum of Sultan Tekesh (late 12th century)

Mausoleum of Il-Arslan (12th century), founder of the pre-Mongol Khwarezmian Empire

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue visits in the afternoon.

18:00 Transfer to Dashoguz Airport

19:50–20:40 Domestic flight to Ashgabat

Transfer to the hotel, dinner, and overnight stay.

DAY 7 - Saturday, May 16

ASHGABAT

After breakfast, continue the tour of the Turkmen capital with a reserved bus. Visit the Anau Mosque, adorned with mosaic decorations depicting two enormous facing dragons, and the Ahalteke Horse Stables, home to the prized Turkmen horse breed. Known for their strength and noble bearing, Ahalteke horses embody the synergy between man and nature.

Proceed to the Carpet Museum, concluding the journey at the ancient Geok Tepe Fortress.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

The afternoon is free for rest or last-minute shopping in the city.

Dinner at the hotel and overnight stay.

DAY 8 - Sunday, May 17

return to your country

QUOTES

Participation Fee: Starting from €2,997 per person based on double occupancy for a group of 10 participants.

Single Supplement: €300.

PAYMENT TERMS

Deposit: €1,000 upon registration.

Balance: Due by February 28, 2025.

Payments: Payments should be made by bank transfer to:

Palidano LLC

IBAN: BE24967431143138

SWIFT/BIC: TRWIBEB1XXX

Reference: 'Deposit (or balance) Turkmenistan trip + participant name.'

Alternatively, payments can be made by card (American Express, Visa, MasterCard, etc.).

CANCELLATION POLICY

- From the day after booking to 30 days before departure: 30%
 - From 29 to 10 days before departure: 50%
 - From 9 to 0 days before departure: 100%
 - No refund will be granted to those who do not show up for departure or withdraw during the trip.
- Non-refundable: Visa fees, registration fees, and insurance.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transfers to and from the airport with an Italian-speaking guide (only for those who choose recommended flights).
- Accommodation in double rooms at 4-star hotels in Ashgabat and one night in a tent at the Darwaza Camp (room in Ashgabat hotel remains available).
- Full board as per the program, including water, tea, and instant coffee in designated restaurants.
- Transportation in reserved buses, SUVs, and 4x4 vehicles, suitable for the number of participants.
- All excursions and entrance fees as per the program.
- Domestic flights.
- Italian-speaking guide throughout the trip, including transfers.
- A 1.5L bottle of water per person per day.
- Porterage services.
- Visa support for obtaining a visa at the airport.
- CGV Escort.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights to and from Italy, which each participant will arrange individually.
- Soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, and espresso coffee during meals.
- Single room supplement.
- Optional medical, baggage, and trip cancellation insurance.
- Optional cancellation insurance for international flights.
- Entry visa, payable upon arrival at the airport, amounting to **89 USD** in cash.
- Immigration fee, payable upon arrival at the airport, amounting to **14 USD** in cash.
- Covid test upon arrival (if required): **41 USD** in cash.

- Any permits for professional photo and video shooting.
- Tips for guides and drivers.
- Anything not expressly listed under “What’s Included.”

N.B.

- **Quotes:** Prices are calculated based on 10 participants. If the minimum is not reached, the cost may increase, and travelers will have the option to cancel the trip without penalties. Flights will only be purchased after confirming the trip with the minimum number of participants.
- **Local Correspondents:** Travel Academy selects correspondents based on their authorization to operate and provide tourist services, as well as their reputation. This is the second trip organized by Travel Academy with these DMCs.
- **Airport Transfers:** Transfers to and from the airport are only for recommended flights.
- **Ground Transportation:** On normal roads: Yutong 45-seater bus (or similar); on unpaved roads: Toyota Hilux or Land Cruiser with 3 passengers per vehicle (or similar).
- **Seating on Ground Transport:** Seats will be rotated.
- **Maximum Number of Participants:** The maximum number of participants is set at 25, including escorts from Italy.
- **Booking Confirmation:** The booking is considered confirmed upon receipt of the deposit.
- **Itinerary Changes:** For technical or operational reasons, if necessary and in the group’s interest, the itinerary may be modified on-site.
- **Service Standards:** Hotel star ratings may not correspond to European standards.
- **Currency:** Euros are not accepted in the country, and credit cards are rarely used. It is strongly recommended to bring US dollars for extras and purchases.
- **Flights and Insurance:** Participants may arrange these independently.
- **General Terms and Conditions:** The general terms and conditions for trips organized by Travel Academy can be downloaded in the website.

More info at
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trip map

