

## BEST OF TURKMENISTAN TOUR 2023 / 2024

Price: €2,620 per person. Deposit: €500. Payment can also be made in USD or CHF.  
Single supplement available for €450 and required for solo travelers.

**Guaranteed departures on the following dates:**

***5 October – 13 October 2023 | 21 April – 29 April 2024 | 3 October - 11 October 2024 |***



Kalpak Travel would like to introduce you to Turkmenistan – a fascinating country like no other. In one week we take you to the country's most interesting historical, natural and architectural highlights: You will visit the marble city of Ashgabat, the ancient ruins at Merv, camp next to the burning gas crater known as "Gate of Hell", visit Yangykala Canyon and go swimming in a luxury beach resort on the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan is a country full of amazing contrasts and on this tour, you will see them all.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- [Ashgabat](#) – The City of White Marble and World Records
- Ancient ruins at Merv and Konye-Urgench – UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Visit stud farm of Akhal Teke horses, the pride of Turkmen Nation
- Stay at a yurt camp beside burning gas crater at [Darvaza](#), the "Gate of Hell"
- Visit Turkmenbashi at the Caspian Sea and overnight in beach resort Avaza
- Explore stunning Yangykala Canyon
- Only on the April departure: Join festivities around "Turkmen Horse Day" in Ashgabat

## ITINERARY OVERVIEW

Day 1: Arrival in Ashgabat.

Day 2: Ashgabat City Tour – Mary (flight).

Day 3: Ancient Merv – Ashgabat (flight).

Day 4: Ashgabat – Darvaza (280km, c. 4-5h).

Day 5: Darvaza – Konye-Urgench – Dashoguz (330km, c. 6h).

Day 6: Dashoguz – Turkmenbashi (flight) – Avaza.

Day 7: Avaza – Yangykala/ Yangysuv Canyons – Avaza (400 km, c. 6h).

Day 8: Avaza – Turkmenbashi – Ashgabat (flight).

Day 9: Departure from Ashgabat.

## MAP



## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrival in Ashgabat.

Early morning arrival in Ashgabat via Istanbul (Turkish Airlines). Complete arrival formalities. Private transfer to the hotel. Immediate check-in at the hotel on arrival. Rest and breakfast at hotel.

In the afternoon we will have the orientation tour of the city. We will explore most striking structures of the city. We will stop at such impressive buildings as the Monument of Independence (resembling a white-marble “Eiffel Tower” located in a beautiful park), a rocket-like Arch of Neutrality, “Palace of Happiness” (the official name for the wedding registration office) shaped like a 3D octagon star, the National Memory complex consisting of an eternal fire rising up to the skies and the Earthquake Memorial (topped by a sculpture of a large bull holding the Earth on its horns). As the sun sets in the evening, we will drive past numerous impressive monuments to enjoy unrealistic views of the “white city” and its extraordinary buildings, shining brightly in the dark.

**Please note:** If you like, you may visit Tolkuchka Sunday market in the first half of the day (most active on Sundays but also functioning on Thursdays and Saturdays).

*Hotel Divan 5\* or similar.*

### Day 2: Ashgabat City Tour – Mary (flight).

Breakfast at hotel. We start our touring today with the visit of the ruins of Old Nisa (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the earliest of the Parthian Empire capitals. Erected on the top an irregular pentagon hill at the foot of the Kopet-Dag Mountains, in atmospheric outskirts of the city, Old Nisa is a beautiful landmark. 14 ha in size, the fort accommodates two semi-excavated complexes of the Parthian period (III c. BC - III c. AD), designated as royal residence and temple complex. Abandoned at the end of the Parthian period, Old Nisa conveyed its functions to New Nisa, another archaeological site located a couple of kilometres to the west, an important medieval Silk Road city. After sightseeing at Old Nisa we proceed to Kipchak village to visit a complex of the biggest mosque in Turkmenistan and the family mausoleum of the first President, Turkmenbashi. Then we return to Ashgabat to visit the National Museum of History (more than 327.000 objects on a display) and observe an exclusive collection of ancient artifacts from different historical and archeological sites of Turkmenistan, such as Old Nisa, Ancient Merv and others.

In the afternoon, fly to Mary by T5-131 at 5:55 PM – 8:35 PM (flight times are subject to change). On arrival, transfer to hotel.

*Hotel Margush 3\* or similar*

### Day 3: Ancient Merv – Ashgabat (flight).

After breakfast, we drive towards Bayram-Ali, the contemporary re-incarnation of and humble suburb of the glorious Ancient Merv (UNESCO World Heritage Site). One of the major archaeological sites of Central Asia, Merv played an important part in the development of the Silk Road for more than 2 000 years. Within the limits of the archaeological park, which is 1200 ha, we will have a chance to observe all constituent parts of the “wandering city”. A series of adjacent cities, which can be roughly divided into the ancient (Erk Kala and Gyaur Kala), the medieval (Sultan Kala with its suburbs), and post-medieval (Abdulla-Khan Kala and Bayram-Ali-Khan Kala), appeared in the course of time as a token of the natural progress of the city from initial stages of its existence to a more advanced level. Besides remnants of the cities of Merv, we will visit the VI-IX cc. AD forts of Big and Little Kyz-Kalas, excellent examples of the so-called corrugated Koshks; the splendid XII c. mausoleums of Sultan Sanjar and Muhammed ibn-Zeyd, demonstrating exquisite Seljuk period brickwork and architectural décor. After sightseeing, we head back to Mary to visit local History Museum, presenting a wide array of archaeological finds (dating back to the III mill. BC through the late XIX century) from both Ancient Merv and Bronze Age sites of the Margush country as well as

interesting ethnographic displays reconstructing the scenes of daily life of the Turkmen population and other minorities of the Murghab oasis. Then we fly back to Ashgabat T5-132 at 7:35 PM – 8:15 PM (flight times are subject to change). On arrival in Ashgabat, transfer to hotel.

*Hotel Divan 5\* or similar*

#### **Day 4: Ashgabat – Darvaza (280km, c. 4-5h).**

Today morning we will travel 12 kilometres east of Ashgabat towards modern Anau, to visit a former medieval city of Bagabad, featuring the citadel of an important Timurid-period centre and the ruins of the Seyit Jemaeddin mosque, which is referred to in many historical sources as “house of beauty”. Many centuries ago (around the 5th mill. BC) this area accommodated the population of early Central Asian farmers who developed the world-famous Anau culture, evidences of which were discovered and extracted during archaeological researches throughout the XX century. Near Anau we will visit a private stud farm, home of the famous Akhal-Tekke horses. Welcome tea. The Akhal-Tekke breed is one of the oldest in existence and is well known for elegance, swiftness, and stamina. Having finished our photo session with the horses, we return to Ashgabat.

In the afternoon, we will travel inland through the Kara Kum desert (280 km/4-5 hrs) with its moving sands and sparse vegetation of saksaul, acacia and kandym bushes. Arriving at the border between the northern and southern regions of Turkmenistan we turn off the main road for an exciting eight-kilometre desert drive. The drive over, we find ourselves a couple of hundred metres away from the Darvaza flaming crater. At daylight, it seems more of an ordinary hole in the ground slightly smoked by fire. We go for a walk around the crater, while our barbecue dinner is being prepared. By the time we notice the smell of a fire-cooked dinner, the simple hole of the crater turns into what may seem a front door of hell, a fire temple or any other mysteriously spectacular place that a romantic’s imagination may associate with fire. We finish the day tasting delicious nomadic food, pondering over the meaning of life in the serene atmosphere of beautiful evening sky and flickering lights of the “eternal” fire. Dinner and overnight in the yurt camp.

*Yurt Camp with shared bathroom facilities*

#### **Day 5: Darvaza – Konye-Urgench – Dashoguz (330km, c. 6h).**

After breakfast, we continue our northward trip towards Konye-Urgench (UNESCO World Heritage Site), a former capital of the medieval Khorezmshah empire (230 km/4-5 hrs). On arrival in Konye-Urgench we will have a chance to take a close look at outstanding monuments of the medieval Khorezm. We will visit the 14 century mausoleum of Turabek Hanum, one of the best living examples of the architecture of its period; minaret of Kutlug Timur, a former highest minaret of Central Asia that used to form a part of the main cathedral mosque of the city; mausoleum of Sultan Tekesh, a beautiful 12 century mausoleum with one of the earliest portals of the east and a unique cone of a dome; Kyrk-Mollah mound, the fabled al-Mamun’s Academy of Sciences; and mausoleum of Il-Arslan, a tiny precursor of unique Khorezmian mausoleums with a pyramidal cone as its dome. Having finished sightseeing, we drive to Dashoguz (100 km/1.5 hrs).

*Hotel Dashoguz 3\* or similar*

#### **Day 6: Dashoguz – Turkmenbashi (flight) – Avaza.**

Breakfast at hotel. Transfer to the airport for flight to Turkmenbashi by T5-235 at 11:40 AM - 12:50 PM (flight times are subject to change). Free time at leisure to enjoy the blue of the Caspian sea. If weather permits, it would be possible to swim in the sea, take 1 hour cruise along the shoreline on a boat (subject to availability), visit city market in Turkmenbashi or just take a walk through the city.

*Hotel Bagtyar 3\* or similar*

**Day 7: Avaza – Yangykala/ Yangysuv Canyons – Avaza (400 km, c. 6h).**

After breakfast drive east to the so-called Yangikala canyons (180 km/4 hrs). We will spend about an hour here to explore the land of the red canyons, enjoying the “Martian” scenery around. Then we continue further north (30 km/1 hr) and, diving into the precipice of the Kara-Bogaz gulf, discover the sparkling Yangysuv canyons. Picnic lunch. Having travelled from the fiery red of the Mars to the blinding snow-white of the moon we take a farewell glance at the canyons and set back off towards the Caspian shore, crossing boundless empty steppes of this region. Enjoy this evening at the luxury of the hotel and the blue of the “Khazar” sea.

*Hotel Bagtyar 3\* or similar*

**Day 8: Avaza – Turkmenbashi – Ashgabat (flight).**

Early in the morning transfer to the airport for our flight to Ashgabat T5-242 at 8:40 AM - 9:40 AM (flight times are subject to change). Check in at hotel after 12:00. Afternoon free time for rest, to shop for souvenirs, visit any of the museums if willing and packing up for departure home.

Please note: On April departure we can join the celebrations of the “Turkmen Horse Day” today, which takes place on the last Sunday in April.

*Hotel Divan 5\* or similar*

**Day 9: Departure from Ashgabat.**

Early morning transfer to the airport for departure home by Turkish airlines via Istanbul.

Please note: If you prefer to fly to Almaty, you can take the evening flight to Ashgabat on day 7 and take the morning flight on day 8 (Thursday) to Almaty.

### Price includes

- All transfers by minibus/ 4WD cars according to the itinerary, as well as your airport transfers
- Accommodation based on double room sharing, incl. early check-in on Day 1
- English-speaking local tour guide accompanying the group
- All entrance tickets as per the itinerary
- Economy class plane tickets for the flights Ashgabat-Mary, Mary-Ashgabat, Dashoguz-Turkmenbashi, Turkmenbashi-Ashgabat
- Full board (breakfasts, lunches, dinners)
- Visa support invitation letter and registration

### Price does not include

- International airfares
- Visa fees (c. 100 USD per person, payable on arrival at the border)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Hotel charges for additional services
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses, e.g. souvenirs
- Tips for guides and drivers

### Important notes:

- Travel insurance is required for this tour. You are free to choose any insurance company.
- The maximum group size is 12 people
- A €500 per person deposit is required at the time of booking, and the balance is due 15 days prior to departure. Terms & Conditions: <https://kalpak-travel.com/terms-and-conditions/>
- One local English speaking tour leader will accompany the group for the whole trip
- You can opt to book the whole itinerary as a private tour. We can also arrange extra nights before or after the trip, and suggest private tour extensions in Turkmenistan or neighboring countries.
- We are happy to suggest flights to get to Ashgabat: please contact us.
- This trip works well with the flights Almaty-Ashgabat-Almaty. You can combine the tour with a trip to Kazakhstan.
- See our [books recommendation on Central Asia & the Silk Road](#)
- Read more about [food in Central Asia](#)