

# South Inylchek Glacier to Khan Tengri, Kyrgyzstan

An incredible trek beneath dazzling 7,000m peaks, right into the heart of the Tien Shan.



## Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

## Holiday overview

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Style                   | Trek  |
| Accommodation           | Hotels, Camping   |
| Grade                   | Vigorous  |
| Duration                | 16 days from London to London   |
| Trekking / Walking days | On trek: 8 days   |
| Min/Max group size      | 4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4   |
| Trip Leader             | Local Leader Kyrgyzstan   |
| Land only               | Joining in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan  |
| Max altitude            | 4,100m/13,451ft, South Inylchek Base Camp, day 11 (or optional ascent of Pesnya Abaya, 4,901m/16,079ft, day 11) |

**Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available**



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2021 Dates:

Sat 17 Jul - Sun 01 Aug

Sat 07 Aug - Sun 22 Aug

### 2022 Dates:

Sat 16 Jul - Sun 31 Jul

Sat 06 Aug - Sun 21 Aug

## Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

## No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

## Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

## Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

## Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

## Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts, who will have first-hand experience of the destination/s you want to visit. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

## Your guide

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For our trip to Kyrgyzstan, you will be provided with an expert local Trek Guide. They are certified/registered guides, and in their company you will certainly gain an insight into the way of life, traditions and culture of the country you are visiting.

## Your trip highlights

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- Trek through wild glacial terrain beneath towering peaks
- Stay in permanent camps along the route
- Enjoy the amphitheatre of high mountains from your camp on the South Inylchek glacier at sunrise and sunset
- Experience the incredible helicopter ride from South Inylchek Base Camp to Karkara
- Swim in the warm(ish) waters of Issyk Kul Lake with views of the mountains on all sides
- Take a guided tour of Bishkek and Karakol
- Optional ascent of Pesnya Abaya

## At a glance itinerary

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|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Days 1-3   | Fly to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Drive to Karakol.   |
| Day 4      | Sightseeing tour in Karakol. Drive to Karkara Base Camp.  |
| Days 5-7   | Helicopter flight to Inylchek Valley. Trek to Iva Camp then on to Merzbacher Glade Camp.        |
| Day 8      | Trek across the South Inylchek Glacier to Merzbacher Lake and back.                             |
| Days 9-10  | Trek to Komsomolskiy Glacier and continue to Dikiy Glacier Camp.                                |
| Day 11     | Trek to South Inylchek Glacier Base Camp, 4,100m/13,451ft. Optional climb of Pesnya Abaya peak. |
| Day 12     | Trek around Khan Tengri Peak.   |
| Day 13     | Helicopter flight to Karkara. Drive to Issyk Kul Lake.  |
| Day 14     | Morning at leisure. Transfer to Bishkek via Boom Gorge - sightseeing en route.                  |
| Days 15-16 | Sightseeing tour of Bishkek. Time at leisure. Fly to London                                     |

## Trip summary

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Kyrgyzstan, located in the heart of central Asia, is a small mountainous landlocked country, and seen by many as a mountain paradise inhabited by nomads who still value their centuries-old traditions. It is a magnificent destination perfect for outdoor adventurers with varied landscapes of alpine lakes, fast-flowing rivers, arid steppe, snow-capped peaks, conifer forests, agricultural plains, rolling meadows and vast walnut forests. However, its main physical characteristic is its mountains: 90% of the land area is above 1,500m/4,921ft and not surprisingly it is sometimes referred to as the 'Switzerland of central Asia', although this comparison does not extend beyond its physical geography. It is dominated by the Tien Shan system, the legendary Celestial Mountains of Chinese folklore. Many of the mountains are permanently covered in snow and ice in the form of glaciers, there are estimated to be around 6,500 distinct glaciers in the country, the largest being the 62km long Inylchek Glacier in the Central Tien Shan. This is where your trek will take you, on a magnificent seven-day trek along the South Inylchek Glacier to reach the South Inylchek Base Camp where you'll achieve unforgettable views of Khan Tengri, 7,010m/ 22,999ft, and Pobeda Peak, 7,439m/24,406ft.

The existence of this great range, otherwise known as the Celestial Mountains or Heavenly Mountains, has been known for many centuries. It runs for over 1,600kms from Tashkent to Urumchi, beyond which it rises again as the Bogdo Ola Range. The mountains would have been visible from the Tien Shan Nan Lu, and the great Silk Road, along which Marco Polo travelled in 1273 with his father and uncle. Later, the mountains would have guided the caravans transporting costly merchandise to Kashgar and the west. However, it is only the central portion southeast of Lake Issyk-Kul, which contains the very high mountains. Here the peaks are closely grouped together, mostly in east-west ranges, near or on the former Sino-Soviet frontier. Despite the records and acute observations of the early travellers, the Tien Shan remained more legend than reality until 1856, when they were visited for the first time by a man of science, Russian geographer Peter Semyonov. His expedition discovered a cluster of some thirty snow-covered summits well over 6,000m/19,685ft, headed by the mighty Khan Tengri, 'Lord of the Sky, Prince of the Spirits'.

The first person to attempt to reach Khan Tengri was the Austrian explorer, Dr Gottfried Merzbacher, in 1902. For a long time Khan Tengri was believed to be the highest peak - certainly it is the most impressive. It can honestly be said that it must rate as one of the most beautiful of all the world's peaks in excess of 6,705m/22,000 ft.

This trek can be very hot and tiring during the daytime with the heat reflecting off the rocky terrain you will be walking on. It can also be quite demanding walking on glacial moraine as you will be winding up and down and round rocks, ice, debris and crevasses and the surface can be quite slippery. It is highly recommended that you take trekking poles as this will ease your progress significantly. Although not technical a good level of fitness is required. The rewards for reaching the base camp however far exceed the amount of effort needed to get there!

### **Special notes**

#### **Optional climb of Pesnya Abaya 4,901m/16,079ft, day 11**

If you wish to climb the peak of Pesnya Abaya on day 11, you need to let your guide know before you begin your trek. If you decide whilst trekking it may be possible to arrange up to 2-3 days before date of the climb as the guide can radio down the valley. Arrangements have to be made in advance for a Mountain Guide to come and lead the ascent.

# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to Bishkek.

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Depart London on your overnight flight to Bishkek.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Bishkek. Transfer to hotel. Rest of day at leisure.

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Arriving in Bishkek you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. You will now have time to rest from the flight and perhaps do a bit of exploring. This capital city is a textbook example of Soviet planning with all streets arranged on a grid with wide boulevards and avenues and a surprising amount of green space with its many parks and woodland dotted around. The city is said in fact to have more trees per person than anywhere else in central Asia. There is a constant reminder of the alpine landscape which lies just beyond the city with views, to the south, of the nearly 5,000m/16,404ft high, snow topped ridge of Ala-Too. There will be a group guided sightseeing tour here at the end of your trip. Tonight it will be a good idea to get a good night's sleep, recover from the flight and prepare for the travel and trekking ahead.



**Overnight: Asia Mountains Hotel or Similar, Bishkek**

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## Day 3: Transfer to Karakol by bus - 8 hours. Meet your mountain guide in Karakol, 1,700m/5,577ft.

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Today after breakfast you will take the long bus ride to Karakol where you will meet your mountain guide and learn more about your trek. Lunch will be taken on the way in a local restaurant and you will get a chance to try some of the typical Kyrgyz food.

Karakol is a sleepy old Russian town situated at the foot of the Tien Shan Mountains. It was first developed as a Russian settlement in the middle of the 19th century with a largely Cossack population and later grew as Dungans, Tatars, Uyghurs and Ukrainians moved here. This town has not always been called Karakol however - back in 1888 the town was re-named Przhevalsk to honour the Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky who first arrived in the 1860's and later returned in 1888 and died here. In 1921 Lenin decided it should revert to its original name of Karakol, followed by Stalin commanding it to be changed back to Przhevalsk in 1939. Finally in 1991 when Kyrgyzstan became independent the name once more changed - going back to the original, Karakol!

**Overnight: Amir Hotel or Green Yard Guesthouse or Similar, Karakol (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 4: Morning sightseeing tour of Karakol. Transfer to Karkara Base Camp, 2,200m/7,218m - 3 hours.

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This morning you will have a guided tour of the town. It is set in the typical Russian grid style with long poplar lined avenues. Most of the buildings are old wooden 'gingerbread' houses with neat gardens of flowers, fruit laden orchards and picket fences. During the tour you will visit the Dungan mosque built in the typical Chinese style and resembling a pagoda, it was constructed by the Dugans, Muslim people of Chinese origin who live in this area. In contrast, you will also go to the wooden Russian Orthodox Church, built without a single metal nail.

You will have lunch at a local café in Karakol town after which you will transfer to Karkara Base Camp, where you will spend the night and prepare to begin your trek. Located 120km south east from Karakol, the drive will take about 3 hours. The road passes through Tup village, then continues eastwards towards checkpoint Karkyra (here you will need to show your border permit and passport, since this is a border zone). You will leave your permits here.

At camp, your tents will be ready for you and dinner prepared. Time to reflect on your first impressions of this country and to look forward to the start of the trek tomorrow.

**Overnight: Karkara Base Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 5: Helicopter flight to Inylchek Valley. Trek to Iva Camp, 2,900m/9,514ft - 10km, 3-4 hours.**

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After breakfast you will take the half hour helicopter flight to the start point of your trek in the Inylchek Valley, at a place called Prijim. You then trek up along the valley to the foot of the Inylchek Glacier until you reach Iva Camp. This will take about 3-4 hours. On the way you can see Nansen peak, 5,690m and Tuz pass, 4,001m.

In 1902, Nansen peak was noticed by the German geographer Gottfried Merzbacher. Even he, who had seen the panorama of many mountains on the globe, including the Alps, the Caucasus, the Himalaya and Karakorum, had a feeling of surprise and delight at the sight of the giant ridge that bounded the valley of Inylchek from the South. Its mighty snow-capped peaks, of the most varied sculptural forms, are visible all the way from west to east. "Among all the proud phalanx, the most magnificent is the peak that rises opposite the Tuz Ashu pass. It is difficult to conjure up a picture of the mighty, extended slopes of this giant, the wildness of its many crests, the splendour of the rapid glaciers, cut into a thousand different shapes and broken into endless fragments. I do not hesitate to extol this wonderful mountain range as the greatest in the Tien Shan mountains. He should certainly be given an appropriate name. " wrote Merzbacher.

**Overnight: Iva Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 6: Trek to Glina Camp, 3,100m/10,170ft - 8km, 5-6 hours.**

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Having reached the mighty Inylchek Glacier you will spend the day following it further up the valley towards the mountains. The glacier is the third largest outside the Polar Regions, 62km long and over 3km wide, it is estimated that it holds enough ice to cover the entire country in 3 metres of melt water.

After breakfast and armed with packed lunches, the day's trek will get underway. There are some steep ascents and descents today as you follow the path along the glacial moraine, traversing terraces and crossing small rivers. Passing over the Putevodnyi Glacier, which flows into the main glacier, and crossing over eroded slopes where landslides have occurred, the path continues upwards. A suitable spot will be chosen for a well-earned lunch break and you can enjoy the views whilst you rest and eat. You will then continue over more undulating terrain in this wild and magnificent scenery before arriving at Glina Camp. This area is named after the Russian word 'Glina' meaning clay, as it is located on a green clay field beside the glacier. Tea, snacks and rest before dinner.



**Overnight: Glina Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 7: Trek to Merzbacher Glade Camp, 3,400m/11,154ft - 9km, 5-6 hours.**

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Setting off again beside the glacier on the lateral moraine you will trek on a largely undulating path, although there are some flatter sections today. A small side glacier will be crossed and a river passed before coming to a small lake. This will be your lunch place and there is the opportunity to swim in the lake - for the brave, the water will be cold! From here it is only another hour to camp in a grassy area known as 'Merzbacher Glade'. This is the last grass you will see for some days. It is located across the glacier from the unique Merzbacher Lake where you will go and explore tomorrow. Tonight though you can enjoy tea and snacks and later dinner, with wonderful views of the lake.

**Overnight: Merzbacher Glade Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 8: Trek across the South Inylchek Glacier to Merzbacher Lake and back - 12km, 5-6 hours.**

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Today you will cross over the great South Inylchek glacier making your way between boulders and ice and walk up to Merzbacher Lake, which is 6km long and 1km wide, and sandwiched between the southern and northern branches of the glacier. The path is easily followed although you will need to watch your step as you will be walking on ice, covered with rocks, stones, sand and mud. The guide will be at hand if you need any help but it is not a technical glacier crossing and should not present any great difficulties. Having arrived you can enjoy the amazing views of this huge lake filled with drifting icebergs, it is a truly spectacular sight.

There is a scientific research station on the glacier where scientists come from all over the world every summer, to study glacial movements, meteorology and the emptying of the Merzbacher Lake.

The lake constitutes a phenomenon known as a proglacial lake, a lake dammed by a glacier. Proglacial lakes are found in various locations all over the world, but usually they enlarge until the glacier retreats, or are short-lived in their existence. Merzbacher Lake however, is exceptional as the lake repeatedly gets emptied, just to get refilled soon after. The process, still not fully understood by geologists, can be described like this: the melt water fills up the lake in the summer months at a rate of up to two meters per day. When the lake is filled, it bursts out and completely empties itself within just three days. The release of the water occurs when the dam of ice buoys upwards and opens up a number of glacial channels in the damming glacier. The water then discharges through the glacier into the valley on the other side of the ice, where it flows into the Inylchek River. When the lake has emptied, the ice dam lowers, thereby blocking the glacial channels. As a result, the lake begins to fill up again. The cycle of the emptying and subsequent refilling of the lake occurs at least once per year, in some years even twice. It is very difficult to estimate the timing when the emptying begins. Usually taking place in August, some years it has occurred as early as Mid-July. Because of the difficulty of knowing when this emptying will occur, it is virtually impossible to reach the lake to witness this phenomenon. Very few people have therefore actually seen it happen. From the lake you then return the way you came back to camp to reflect on the phenomenon you have seen - either with or without all its water.

**Overnight: Merzbacher Glade Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 9: Trek to Komsomolskiy Glacier, 3,800m/12,467ft - 12km, 5-6 hours.**

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A long trekking day awaits you today as you continue the steady walk up the side of the glacier, the scenery is ever more dramatic as you gain height, with snow, rocks and ice of many colours surrounding you. You will be venturing into a landscape of ice and rocks with much of the trail crossing up and down moraine and past smaller side glaciers flowing into the main valley. The path winds its way around rocks, streams and small crevasses, which can be time consuming and a contrast to the alpine meadows of the first days. You will really feel as if you are entering the high mountains. You will pass Shokalskiy and Komsomolez glaciers which flow down and feed into the Inylchek glacier. The camp tonight is on the Komsomolez glacier and will be considerably colder than the previous camps - have your warm jackets ready! It can also be windy here in the late afternoon, so the hot drinks and dinner in the sheltered dining tent will be very welcome.

**Overnight: Komsomolskiy Glacier Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 10: Trek to Dikiy Glacier Camp, 3,900m/12,795ft - 7-8km, 3-5 hours.**

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Another fantastic day of crossing undulating glacial moraine as you enter further into the Tien Shan Mountains. All around now are numerous nameless, unclimbed peaks around 5,000m/16,400ft high.

The trail leads from the camp up and down over the Proletarskiy glacial moraine towards Dikiy Glacier. Reaching the middle of this moraine you will turn and head up along it towards the glacier itself. The route flattens out a little and becomes easier to walk on. Lunch will be had and then after a further short while Dikiy Glacier camp is reached, located behind Pesnya Abaya peak, an optional ascent for tomorrow. The camp is beautifully situated with fabulous views of Khan Tengri, 7,010m/22,999ft, and Pobeda, 7,439m/24,406ft, peaks.

**Overnight: Dikiy Glacier Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Trek to South Inylchek Glacier Base Camp, 4,100m/13,451ft - 8km, 4-6 hours. Optional climb of Pesnya Abaya, 4,901m/16,079ft - 7-10hrs.**

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Today you have an option to climb Pesnya Abaya standing at 4,901m/16,079ft. Heading off at approximately 5.30am, it can take between 5 - 6 hours to ascend the mountain and 2 - 4 hours to descend back down to Dikiy Glacier Camp. It is not technical, mostly on scree until you reach the snow and ice towards the summit. The climbing gear required to climb the peak includes crampons, a climbing harness and karabiners. The option for climbing this peak is included in the cost of your trip and includes the services of an expert guide and the climbing equipment. When booking your place on this trek, please let us know if you would like to climb the peak as this experience needs to be booked in advance.



This is a physically challenging ascent and decent and, after the climb, if the group feels unable to continue to the South Inylchek Base Camp immediately, you will spend an additional night at the same camp, Dikiy Glacier Camp. In this case, after a night's sleep you will continue to the South Inylchek Base Camp in the morning, and enjoy a radial hike to the foot of Khan Tengri in the afternoon.

For non-summiters there is a day's trek to reach the highest camp on the South Inylchek Glacier. The route is over the glacier as the camp is situated on the centre of the moraine. The path winds round rocks, ice, small lakes and crevasses but is safe and requires no equipment. Camp will be reached by lunch time, which will be taken on arrival. The afternoon is then free to relax and enjoy your surroundings with fabulous views of the two highest peaks in this mountain range - Pobeda and Khan Tengri. Khan Tengri in particular must rate as one of the most beautiful peaks in the world. A natural phenomenon, it is almost perfectly formed and the top half is marble. Thus, at sunrise and sunset it produces the most wonderful colours. All the hard work walking up over the moraine will be rewarded by this magnificent amphitheatre of mountains, so sit back and enjoy the view and the atmosphere of being in this amazing place.

As the camps are only open for two months a year there can be many climbers here at base camp, preparing for their ascents of the two biggest peaks of the Tien Shan. You might be able to spot climbers on the mountains with the assistance of binoculars and will certainly see the activity associated with climbing expeditions. This can create a real atmosphere of excitement and often there are parties going on in the evenings.

**Overnight: South Inylchek Base Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 12: Trek towards the base of Khan Tengri Peak - 8km, 4-6 hours.**

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Today you will hike on the glacier towards the base of Khan Tengri. This is a relatively flat area of the glacier so not too strenuous a day. The excursion will lead you amongst a dazzling panorama of ice-caked, ice-fluted peaks and hanging glaciers in a 360° arc. It is a stunning environment in which to spend a day and by the time you return to camp you will have a sense of awe for this spectacular terrain.

**Overnight: South Inylchek Base Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 13: Helicopter flight to Karkara - 30-40 mins. Transfer to Issyk Kul Lake.**

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A farewell to base camp and to the mountains, but in style! This is probably one of the most exciting flights you are likely to make as you pass between huge peaks and skim over ridges as you descend out of the mountains. After the raw excitement of boarding and take-off on the small pad next to base camp, the flight down the South Inylchek Glacier can be thoroughly enjoyed with some nostalgia. The helicopter climbs and glides over mountain passes to exit the Tien Shan. A final wave goodbye to the Celestial Mountains and very shortly you land at Karkara.



Now it is back in a bus to drive to Issyk Kul Lake (meaning warm lake in the Kyrgyz language), the second largest alpine lake in the world after Lake Titicaca in South America. It measures 182km long by 58km wide and appeared as a result of volcanic activity. Being heated by thermal springs it never freezes despite very cold air temperatures and in summer can reach 25 - 28°C. The climate is far milder than the Kyrgyzstan average due to the moderating effect of the lake and it has become something of an oasis. It was a renowned beauty spot in the old Soviet Union and there are plenty of Soviet style resorts along its northern sandy shores. Today it attracts many Kyrgyz tourists who come to relax and enjoy the beautiful setting surrounded by mountains.

The 200km drive will take around 4 hours and lunch will be taken on the way. You should arrive in plenty of time to enjoy a swim in the clear waters or a stroll along the beach. Your hotel will be situated right by the lake shore. Dinner will be at the hotel.

**Overnight: Karven Issyk Kul or Karven 4 Seasons or Similar, Issyk Kul Lake (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 14: Morning at leisure. Afternoon transfer to Bishkek through Boom Gorge - 5-6 hours.**

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A relaxed morning at your hotel, time to rest, take a swim and enjoy the lakeside setting. After lunch you will drive back to Bishkek through the Boom Gorge, a narrow canyon where the railway, road and Chui River squeeze together. The 250 km drive will take about 5-6 hours.

Further on as you near the town of Tokmok you will stop and visit the reconstructed Burana Tower. This is an old minaret and is all that remains of the old town of Balasagum, established by the Kharkhanids at the end of the 10th century. It was on an important trading route of the Silk Road and the town flourished for centuries until its eventual decline in the 15th century. There is a small museum with information about the town and a collection of around 80 Turkic 'balbals', or stone grave markers, dating from between the 6th and 10th century which have been gathered from all over the country and placed here. Continuing the rest of the way you will arrive back in Bishkek for a two night stay.

**Overnight: Asia Mountains Hotel or Similar, Bishkek (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 15: Morning sightseeing tour of Bishkek. Free afternoon.**

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This morning you will have a guided walking tour of the city taking around 3 hours. The guide will show you all the main sights including the Manas Monument, the State History Museum, Ala-Too Square and Victory Square. You will finish your tour in the largest department store in town with the opportunity to buy any souvenirs you might want. There are many optional extra sights that can be added to the tour, so make sure you discuss with your guide what you would like to see in the time allotted.

In the afternoon you will have free time to relax before your farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

**Overnight: Asia Mountains Hotel or Similar, Bishkek (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 16: Transfer to airport for flight back to London.**

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You will be transferred back to the airport for your flight home.

## Our grading system

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The South Inylchek Glacier to Khan Tengri is graded as a Vigorous trekking holiday, as described below.

### **Vigorous**

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

These holidays would suit enthusiastic hill/mountain walkers.

## Trip altitude

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**Important** - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend [www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.

## What the price includes

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**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ An English speaking local leader throughout
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK (if booking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ All other transfers as per the itinerary
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Good standard accommodation
- ✓ 14 breakfasts, 13 lunches and 13 dinners
- ✓ Sightseeing as specified
- ✓ All entry fees for sites visited on group itinerary
- ✓ Activities as specified
- ✓ Optional climb of Pesnya Abaya (day 11)
- ✓ Hire of climbing gear for ascent of Pesnya Abaya
- ✓ Helicopter flight
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ The option of joining one of our four pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Tips
- × Visa fees

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

For our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag (these are required for certain treks), there is the choice of receiving either a free Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece. If you are not eligible for a free bottle, you will still be able to buy a special Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



### **Amir Hotel or Green Yard Guesthouse or Similar, Karakol**

Both hotels are modern, well designed and comfortable. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms.



### **Fixed camps**

All the camps are permanently erected for the summer season with spacious tents. Camps located on the glaciers have tents erected on wooden platforms with camp beds. There is a toilet tent in each camp and a large dining tent with tables and chairs. Hot washing water is available at all camps. At Merzbacher Glade Camp there is a hot shower. At South Inylchek Base Camp there is a washing cabin with hot water.



### **Karven Issyk Kul or Karven 4 Seasons or Similar, Issyk Kul Lake**

You will stay in a lakeside hotel with all modern amenities and good sized rooms with en suite bathrooms.



### **Asia Mountains Hotel or Similar, Bishkek**

A comfortable 3\* hotel in a central location with all modern amenities. All rooms have en suite bathrooms.

## Meal arrangements

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14 Breakfasts, 13 Lunches, 13 Dinners.

## Flight arrangements

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### Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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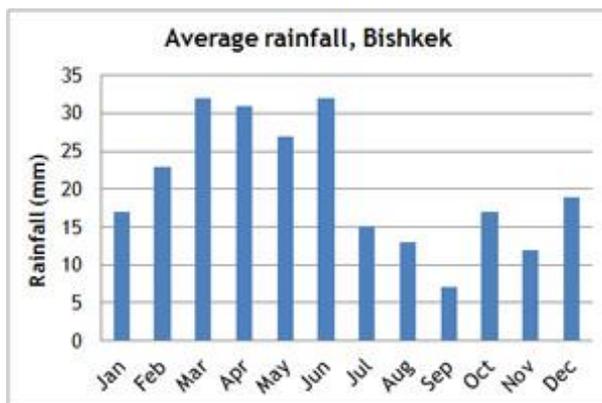
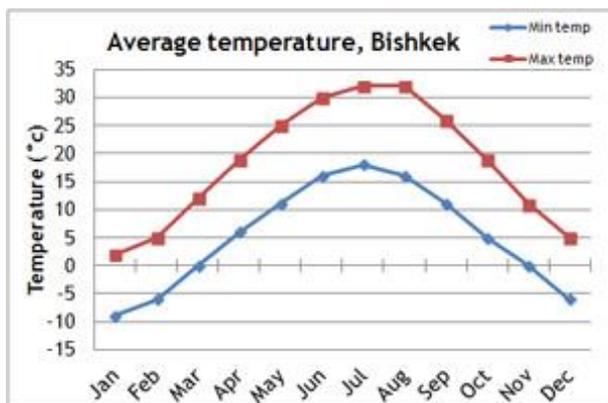
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- This is a highly varied itinerary combining a wild and beautiful trek, with a spectacular glacier walk and helicopter ride.
- You will encounter an abundance of stunning flora.
- You have the option of climbing Pesnya Abaya Peak at 4,901m/16,079ft.
- We provide comfortable fixed tents at all Camps.
- You not only see some of the most stunning mountains and glaciers in the world, but you also get to experience the culture and people of Central Asia.
- We have a maximum size of 12 to provide all the benefits of a genuine small group experience without the negative impact that can be associated with larger trekking groups
- Our Marketing Manager, Kerry Robins, completed this trek in 2018 and would be very happy to discuss her experience and answer any queries you may have.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

## What our clients say

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*A tough and extraordinary experience in the high mountains of the Tien Shan, trekking some 85 km over 7 days, perpetually up and down across rocky moraines, glaciers, and active scree slopes, from altitudes of 2500 to 4100 m. Wonderful scenery in good weather, with 360 degree panoramas of 5000m+ peaks and a geomorphologists dream! Aside from the amazing landscapes, our trekking guide, Vadim, absolutely made the trip for us. Hugely professional, with much experience in the Tien Shan, wonderfully supportive and with a keen sense of fun. Above all, he ensured our safety in so far as possible in this challenging trekking landscape. We are truly delighted we did this trek - a real test of agility and fitness that provides a sense of personal achievement and jaw-dropping awe at one of the earth's great landscapes.*

*-Dr R G & Mr M F, London*



*Having travelled with your company many times we know we can rely on you to give us the best possible experience on our holidays.*

*- Mr & Mrs G, Guernsey*



*"The Tien Shan (the Mountains of Heaven or the Heavenly Mountains) are without doubt one of the most beautiful mountain ranges I have trekked within. At lower altitudes the mountain views are incredible; steep valley slopes are decorated with lush green grass and dense fir trees; glacier melt water flows at speed through picture-perfect valleys and evidence of working nomadic life is all around. At higher altitudes, and in particular on the South Inylchek Glacier, the snow-capped peaks of the Tien Shan Mountains are scenes I will never forget. The journey up the glacier is indeed 'a journey' and a chance to absorb, experience and understand the pure power and meaning of an impressive glacier life cycle. This adventure is one I will always cherish."*

*- Kerry Robins, Mountain Kingdoms*

*The views from South Inylchek Base Camp are truly stupendous!*

*- Steve Berry, Managing Director*

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### **Carbon Offsetting**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### **Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

