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/Strenuous
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	South Inylchek Base Camp, 4,100m/13,451ft, Day 11

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available

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Group Departure Dates and Prices

Group departures

2026 Dates

Sat 11 Jul – Sun 26 Jul
Sat 01 Aug – Sun 16 Aug

2027 Dates

Sat 10 Jul – Sun 25 Jul
Sat 31 Jul – Sun 15 Aug

Group prices
Visit the holiday page of our website for up-to-date land only and flight inclusive prices for all group departure dates https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/holiday/south-inylchek-glacier-to-khan-tengri.

Single supplement options can also be found here.

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

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

- 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

At a glance itinerary

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	Optional climb to viewpoint. Trek to South Inylchek Glacier Base Camp, 4,100m/13,451ft.
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

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!

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly London to Bishkek.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Bishkek.

Overnight: In flight

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

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

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

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)

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

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)

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

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 Karakorom, 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)

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

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)

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

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)

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

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)

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

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 Shokalskyi 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)

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

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 Proletarsky 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. 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)

Day 11: Optional climb to viewpoint. Trek to South Inylchek Glacier Base Camp, 4,100m/13,451ft – 4km, 3-4 hours.

It's quite a short trek today trek to reach the highest camp on the South Inylchek Glacier, although there is the option before the trek to ascend to a panoramic viewpoint if you're feeling energetic. The climb to the viewpoint at 4,300m is not difficult and the views are well worth the effort if it's a clear day.

The trek to South Inylchek Base Camp is over the glacier as the camp is situated on the centre of the moraine. The route winds round rocks, ice, small lakes and crevasses but is safe and requires no equipment. You will arrive at camp in time for lunch. 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)

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

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)

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

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)

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

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)

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

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)

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

You will be transferred back to the airport for your flight home. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

The South Inylchek Glacier to Khan Tengri is graded as a Vigorous/Strenuous 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.

Strenuous
Our strenuous trekking holidays can involve anything from 10 to 30 days on trek and are often in remote areas, far from 'civilisation'. Rest days are interspersed but there may be up to 7 consecutive days of hard walking. Most treks reach altitudes of at least 4,900m/16,000ft and there will be a great deal of ascent and descent. The majority of our strenuous treks utilise camping, tea house or mountain lodge accommodation.

Trip altitude

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 as a good source of information.

What the price includes

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:

- ✓ 14 x breakfasts, 13 x lunches and 13 x dinners
- ✓ 5 nights good standard hotel accommodation on a twin-share basis
- ✓ 9 nights in full-service camps on a twin-share basis
- ✓ An English speaking local leader throughout
- ✓ Helicopter flight
- ✓ All transfers and all road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing and activities as specified in the itinerary, with all visitor entry fees
- ✓ A Satellite phone is carried by your guide in case of an emergency
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ 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
- × Visa fees
- × Tips

Your accommodation

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

14 x Breakfasts, 13 x Lunches, 13 x Dinners.

Flight arrangements

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.

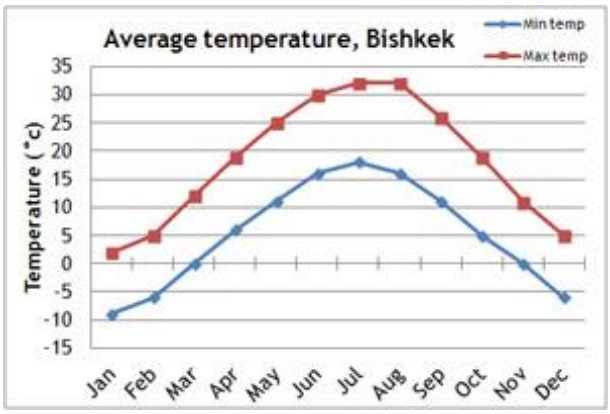
Further information

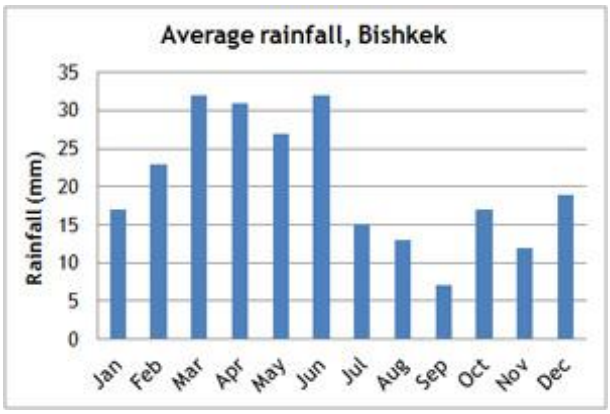
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

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?

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 team 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 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

A brilliant trip, in a fascinating country. The trek was tough in places but the amazing scenery more than made up for the effort, and that's before you take into account the breathtaking helicopter ride!
-MS, London

An impressive trek up the South Inylchek glacier to the base camp for Khan Tengri and Pobeda peaks. There were few other people on the route (until base camp) and it felt genuinely remote. The fixed camps offered comfortable overnight accommodation and good food in dramatic locations with fine views. Walking on the glacier was more difficult than anticipated, as the glacier has become more broken up and crevassed in recent years but the guide found a route through / around the more challenging sections. Microspikes would help in some places. The helicopter flights in and out were very dramatic with great views of the mountains and glacier! Plus interesting visits to cultural and other sites on the road journeys to and from Karakara base camp.
-David A

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

No crowds, great guides and companions, beautiful scenery and an interesting blend of Kyrgyz and Russian culture. Not forgetting the dramatic exit and entry by helicopter.
-John Maples

A fantastic trip, very well organised in every aspect to a culturally interesting country & a well guided journey through spectacular landscapes. You need plenty of energy & to be very sure footed to trek a number of consecutive days on demanding glaciated terrain. I nearly wore out new soles on my boots in just over a week! It may help to bring yaktrax or similar to help with some icy sections. Peak day is tough but rewarding. Food at camps is tasty and plentiful & tents are large & comfy.
-Mark Green

Friendly, knowledgeable and highly competent guides in both the city and trekking sections of the trip meant that I had full confidence in the conduct of the holiday and felt safe and secure at all times. A great feeling of achievement thanks to the unfailing support of our excellent guides and porters. Well chosen hotels and restaurants ensured an enjoyable apres- trek recovery before flying home.
-Trevor Lunness

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

Mountain Kingdoms – distinctly different

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.

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 a 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

For almost four decades, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now have trips to all corners of the globe but are conscious that our holidays can have a detrimental impact on the world around us and want to do all we can to reduce that.

We have focused our main responsible tourism efforts on reducing the carbon emissions produced by our holidays, and counterbalancing 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

Since 2007, we have donated a percentage of our client and staff flight costs to the Ecoan tree planting project in Peru. Ecoan are a trusted local NGO who use the funds directly to purchase seedling trees with the long-term goal of restoring 2.5 million acres of Andean land.

Ecoan maintains over 100 tree nurseries across Peru where their tree saplings are grown and then transported to planting sites during the rainy season. They use native trees such as the Polylepis, as these can survive at high altitudes. As well as sequestering carbon, they help protect against soil erosion, landslides and the effects of extreme weather on local crops. As such, they are enormously beneficial to the economic well-being of the surrounding communities. This is very much a community-led conservation project, with the local Quechuan people coming together to plant tens of thousands of saplings in the Andean highlands where they live. During the annual Queuña Raymi (tree festival), over 150,000 native trees can be planted in a single day!

For every person booking a long-haul, flight inclusive holiday with us, Ecoan can purchase and plant 20 trees in Peru, and for short-haul flights, 7 trees. Typically, we send over $7,000 per year to Ecoan, which is over 7,000 trees.

Reducing carbon emissions

- ✓ We offer the majority of our clients a free, filtered Water-to-Go bottle to help reduce the need for single-use plastic bottles during their travels.
- ✓ We predominantly use locally-owned hotels and guesthouses rather than multinational chains. In some of our destinations, such as Bhutan, we use homestays. Not only does this type of small-sized, locally-owned accommodation have a much-reduced carbon footprint, but it also helps support communities.
- ✓ We evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel-efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, choose direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We have stopped offering unnecessary optional flights, such as Everest sightseeing. We try to minimise internal flights where possible.
- ✓ We recycle as much of our office waste as possible and have introduced a client portal to reduce paperwork and to make it easier for clients to manage their trips online.

Wider commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism

- ✓ We are signatories to the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside other like-minded travel companies to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.
- ✓ We will continue to support several charities with whom we have a long-standing relationship, such as Shiva Charity in Nepal.

Over the years, we have given sizeable payments to emergency relief when a disaster has occurred in the countries we operate in. We always try to ensure that these funds go directly to those who need them most to help rebuild their lives.