

Kyrgyzstan 'Art of the Nomads'

A special group tour led by conservationist,
charity founder & photographer, Joan Pollock

19 June - 01 July 2023



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Departure Date: 19 June 2023

Experience the sublime landscapes and fascinating nomadic culture of Kyrgyzstan on a special TransIndus group tour. Devised and led by Central Asia expert Joan Pollock, the route covers the most rugged, mountainous stretch of the old Silk Road between China and Uzbekistan - a region of sun-lit snow peaks, vast blue-green glacial lakes and pastures dotted with yurt encampments.

Joan has timed the trip to coincide with one of the country's great cultural events: the annual Shyrdak Festival of Felt Art, where you'll be able to buy the finest quality Kyrgyz rugs and carpets, and watch them being made by the country's top artisans.

In addition to seeing some of the most spellbinding vistas in Central Asia, you'll also get to experience life in a genuine nomads' camp, sample traditional Kyrgyz and Uyghur cuisine, and learn about the region's Russian colonial legacy through its art and architecture.

Accommodation throughout will be in comfortable, well run hotels and traditional yurt camps set up in glorious locations. The weather in late June is optimal, with warm, mostly dry and sunny weather, and night-time temperatures comparable with those of northern Europe.

Tour Highlights

- The annual Shyrdak Festival of felt art
- Prehistoric monuments of Burana and Cholpon Ata
- The Jeti-Oguz and Barkskoon Gorges
- Spectacular lakes of Issyk-Kul and Son-Kul
- Yurt stays in remote nomad encampments
- Meals with Kyrgyz and Uyghur families
- Visits to traditional embroidery and felt carpet workshops



Joan Pollock

Joan started her career as a nurse, but began working as a guide on trips to Asia in the 1970s, accompanying some of the first organized tours into China and the Soviet Union. Over three decades of travel in many countries since, she has formed long-standing attachments to certain communities, notably the inhabitants of the remote Himalayan valley of Spiti, where she founded a charity focusing on the health and education of children. The Spiti Projects' (www.spiti.org) won a UN Award for Low Carbon at the Climate Change Conference, in Marrakech 2016, for the construction of a Community Centre using Earth Technology & Solar energy, reducing Co2 Carbon Emissions. A Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, Joan is also a keen photographer.



London - Bishkek - Cholpon Ata - Karakol - Bokonbayevo - Kochkor - Naryn - Son-Kul - Bishkek - London

Day 1: Bishkek

On arrival, the group will be met by our local representative and transferred to the hotel, where we'll have time to recover from international flights. In the afternoon, visit the city's impressive Ala-Too square, as well as the famous Oak Park.

Day 2: Bishkek sightseeing

Today we'll continue our sightseeing of Bishkek with a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts and an embroidery school where you'll take a workshop to learn more about this traditional art.

Day 3: Bishkek - Issyk-Kul

A busy day today as we leave the capital behind for an overnight stay near Issyk-Kul. En route, visit the remains of the minaret, Burana Tower. Walk around the superb collection of balbals (gravestones used by the nomadic Turkic's) and petroglyphs (stone carvings). On arrival at Issyk-Kul we'll visit the Museum of Nomads.

Day 4: Issyk-Kul - Karakol

Visit the incredible petroglyphs of Cholpon-Ata this morning. They are situated high above the lake in an open-air garden - covering some 42 hectares - containing a vast number of prehistoric monumental structures. Afterwards, we'll drive along the lakeside to Karakol.

Day 5: Karakol

In the morning, visit the blue-tiered Russian Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Chinese Muslim built Dungan Mosque, and the Prjevalsk Museum, dedicated to the famous explorer who spent a lifetime travelling through central Asia.

In the afternoon, head out of town to explore the Jeti-Oguz Gorge and famous "7 bulls" rock formation. Later, enjoy dinner with a Uyghur family and try the national dish of lagman.

Day 6: Karakol - Bokonbayevo

Today, we follow the Silk Road along the south side of Issyk-Kul Lake. On the way, stop at Barkskoon Gorge, where



we'll take a walk up to the natural waterfalls. On arrival in Bokonbayevo, enjoy a demonstration of how the eagle hunters catch their prey, a tradition dating back 100's of years. Tonight, we'll stay in a traditional nomadic yurt camp.

Day 7: Bokonbayevo - Kochkor

This morning we head towards the centre of Kyrgyzstan's felt handicrafts - Kochkor. On the way, stop at Kyzyl-Suu village to visit a yurt workshop. Here, we'll be shown how the nomadic dwellings are manufactured and assembled. Continue to a felt workshop to witness the art process of the traditional "Elechek" hat. This evening will be a special overnight in local homestay.

Day 8: Kochkor - Naryn

Today we'll drive to Naryn and enjoy some time at leisure, before exploring the local museum. Enjoy a traditional dinner of besh-barmak (meat broth) and boorsok (a type of fried dough).

Day 9: Naryn

A special day as we visit the annual Kyrgyz Shyrdak Festival that takes place in At-Bashy village for only two days per year. Shyrdak is a traditional Kyrgyz carpet made of felt and is one of the most complex processes in central

Asia tradition. Being at the festival, it's also a superb time to buy local arts directly from manufacturers.

Day 10: Naryn - Son-Kul

This morning will be a memorable drive over the picturesque Moldo-Ashuu Pass to the alpine Son-Kul, the second largest lake in the country after Issyk-Kul. Spending two nights at a yurt camp here will enable you to get familiar with the traditional lifestyle of Kyrgyz nomads, amongst the rural tranquillity of the summer pastures dotted with grazing cattle, mountains and the lake itself.

Day 11: Son-Kul

A full day at Son-Kul to continue learning about the nomads and the beautiful region they call home. Take some time to enjoy a walk with unrivalled rural views of the lake and surrounding mountains, as well as an opportunity to spot some local birds. If a fan of horse riding, there may be an extra opportunity for to try your hand at trotting through the local landscape.

Day 12: Son-Kul - Bishkek

The long road from Son-Kul to Bishkek is one of epic proportions with stunning landscapes out of every window. Arriving in the late afternoon, there'll be time to visit the atmospheric Osh Bazaar before tomorrow's departure.

Day 13: Bishkek

This morning, we'll be met at the hotel and driven to the international airport.

Travel Arrangements

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Tour Price

£2,475 per person

Single Room Supplement

£325 per person

Meal Plan

Breakfast daily in Bishkek and half board elsewhere

What's included:

- Accommodation for 12 nights
- Internal travel by shared vehicle
- All sightseeing expenses
- English-speaking local guides throughout

What's Excluded:

- International flight ticket
- Travel Insurance
- Tips and gratuities
- Camera fees
- Horseback riding at Son-Kul
- Meals not already included

“...the level of expertise shown by the local guide, and the quality of the museum guides was superb! I have rarely enjoyed a museum tour so much. Joan Pollock was also very important in the success of our holiday.”

Mr Neill Murray

To book or for more information contact:

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