KYRGYZSTAN - **£1,950**

**22nd June 2020 - 5th July 2020 (14 days)**

Kyrgyzstan is a small but geographically spectacular country – a Central Asian Shangri La, often referred to as the Swiss Alps of Asia. This is an adventurous and challenging tour with 75% of the route on poor tarmac or unsurfaced roads in mountainous terrain. The route circumnavigates Chui Province south of the capital Bishkek, crossing several high passes of over 3,000m through the Heavenly Mountains and following river valleys to Son Kul Lake and Issyk Kul Lake.

Outside of Bishkek there is an almost complete absence of tourist infrastructure. Participants should be prepared for basic conditions, overnighting in tents and yurts, with four nights in small rural guesthouses and two nights in a hotel in Bishkek. Proposed daily riding distances are between 25km and 85km, but re-routing may be necessary according to weather and road conditions, especially over the high passes. There will be full vehicle support from an experienced local crew.

**Holiday Itinerary**

**Monday 22nd June**
Fly from London Heathrow to Istanbul on Turkish Airlines flight TK1980 departing 1130, arriving 1720. Continue to Bishkek on Turkish Airlines flight TK348 departing 2130.

**Tuesday 23rd June**
Arrive in Bishkek at 0540. After a vehicle transfer of around 45 mins to our hotel we'll have breakfast and then assemble our bikes. There will be an optional guided walking tour of Bishkek in the afternoon. Stay 1 night (hotel). Meals: B L D

**Wednesday 24th June**
We begin the day with a vehicle transfer of 140km which takes us over the 3,180m Too-Ashuu Pass and into the remote Suusamyr Valley. After a picnic lunch we'll begin our cycling, initially along the flat plains of the Suusamyr Valley, on a dirt road. After reaching the Kökömeren River we enter an impressive gorge which we follow all of the way to the village of Kyzyl-Oi. 52km (150m total ascent). Stay 1 night (guesthouse). Meals: B L D

**Thursday 25th June**
We continue cycling alongside the Kökömeren River within a dramatic gorge on a dirt road. We emerge into a wider valley surrounded by soaring ochre
Monday 29th June
A steep 3km climb out of Tolok village will bring us to a magnificent viewpoint looking back up the valley that we descended yesterday. We join a tarmac road that brings us to the small village of Sary Bulak. There is then the option to take a very picturesque side trip up and down the valley of the fast flowing Dolon river before a morning coffee break. It's then nearly all downhill on smooth tarmac to the town of Kochkor. There will be time in the afternoon to visit shops selling felt carpets and other felt products for which the town is well renowned. 73km (280m total ascent). Stay 1 night (guesthouse). Meals: B L D

Tuesday 30th June
Today's ride is all on tarmac as we head east, initially on the main road, but soon turning onto a quiet side road that runs alongside the turquoise waters of the Orto-Tokoy reservoir. The road then passes through a dry, scrubby ‘badlands’ landscape which is almost semi-desert in appearance before nearing the shoreline of Issyk Kul Lake, the second-largest alpine lake in the world (Lake Titicaca is the largest). We ride alongside the lake's southern shoreline to reach the village of Kara Talaa. There will be an opportunity in the afternoon for a swim in the lake. 62km (185m total ascent). Stay 1 night (guesthouse). Meals: B L D

Wednesday 1st July
After yesterday's riding on tarmac roads, today we return to the unsealed variety as we head off into the hills to the south of Issyk Kul Lake. Although a short day, it's nearly all uphill as we ride alongside the Tuura Suu River. As we gain height the river valley narrows until the road and river are squeezed together into a narrow gorge. At the top of the gorge we emerge into high alpine meadows surrounded by distant lofty mountains. Tucked away in the corner of these meadows we will find our destination, the remote Tuura Suu yurt camp. After lunch at the camp there will be opportunities for horse trekking and guided walking. 28km (580m total ascent). Stay 1 night (yurt). Meals: B L D

Thursday 2nd July
We leave camp, initially on foot for 500m, to join an unsurfaced road. A steep (12%) climb for 3km will bring us to the top of the Ala-Bash Pass (2,365m) followed by an 8km descent. A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced undulating roads will take us through the Kongur-O?lo?ng valley before a final 10km uphill section to the village of Temir-Kanat. We then leave our bikes with the support crew as we walk the 1.7km uphill to our remote yurt camp which offers outstanding views of the surrounding mountains. 59km (810m total ascent). Stay 1 night (yurt). Meals: B L D

Friday 3rd July
After walking downhill from our yurt camp we'll begin cycling on an unsurfaced road, initially uphill, before a long descent of 12km on smooth tarmac to reach the town of Bekonbaevo for morning coffee. We then continue on a mix of surfaced and unsurfaced roads to a yurt camp on the southern shoreline of Issyk Kul Lake. In the afternoon there will be opportunities for swimming in the lake. 28km (115m total ascent). Stay 1 night (yurt). Meals: B L D

Saturday 4th July
After breakfast we will be transferred by vehicle for the 4½ hour journey back to Bishkek. After lunch at the hotel we will need to pack our bikes for the journey home tomorrow. Stay 1 night (hotel). Meals: B L D

Sunday 5th July
After breakfast we take a vehicle transfer of around 45 mins to Bishkek airport for Turkish Airlines flight TK345 to Istanbul departing 1010, arriving 1315. Continue to London Heathrow on Turkish Airlines flight TK1983 departing 1835, arriving 2045. Meals: B

Meals: B = Breakfast  L = Lunch  D = Dinner

Holiday Summary

Accommodation & Meals
Two nights are spent in a small hotel in Bishkek with two people sharing en-suite rooms. Four nights are spent in small rural guesthouses with up to four people sharing each room. Five nights are spent in yurts with up to four people per yurt. One night is spent wild camping with up to two people sharing a tent. All camping equipment will be supplied with the exception of sleeping bags and sleeping mats. Beds in the guesthouses and yurts will consist of mattresses on the floor with sheets and blankets supplied. No single rooms are available. All meals are provided from breakfast on arrival in Bishkek to breakfast on departure from Bishkek. Participants with any special dietary requirements are asked to contact the Tour Manager prior to booking.

Vehicle Support
Vehicles for the transfer of luggage and participants/bikes when necessary will accompany the group on all cycling days.

Passports, Visa & Health
EU citizens must hold a passport that is still valid for at least six months at the end of the tour. A visa is not required. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa.

There are no compulsory health-related requirements for EU residents, though it is strongly recommended that you are vaccinated against Typhoid and Hepatitis A and B. Tetanus and polio vaccinations should also be up to date at the time of travel. You should contact your doctor at least 3 months prior to travel to obtain these vaccinations and the latest advice to travellers.

Travel Insurance
Our Booking Conditions stipulate that, for holidays outside the UK, travel insurance is mandatory. Details of the level of cover needed and other conditions you should check are stated in the Booking Conditions. CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd cannot accept responsibility for any costs that may be incurred due to insufficient insurance cover.

Price
The price of £1,950 is based on a minimum number of 9 people taking part in the holiday; please note Booking Conditions clause 3. If there are insufficient bookings by 13th April 2020, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Price Includes
- Return flight from London Heathrow to Bishkek
- Vehicle transfers in Bishkek between airport and hotel
- All other vehicle transfers as specified in the itinerary
- Support vehicles to transfer luggage, participants and bikes
- 2 nights hotel, 4 nights guesthouse, 5 nights yurt, 1 night camping sharing room/yurt/tent
- 13 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 12 dinners
- Bottled drinking water on cycling days
- Services of a Kyrgyz English-speaking guide plus support crew
- Guided walking tour of Bishkek
- Guided walking and horse trekking at Tura Suu yurt camp
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price Does Not Include
- Travel to and from London Heathrow
- Turkish Airlines cycle carriage charge (90 euros each way)
- Drinks with lunches and dinners (other than water and tea)
- Gratuities for local guide and support crew (budget 50 euros)
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Payment Schedule
A deposit of £195 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £1,755 per person to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 13th April 2020.

Cancellations
Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Written notice received: Cancellation charge:
Before 13th April 2020 Deposit (£195)
From 13th April 2020 through to departure 100% (£1,950)

Additional Information
Area Covered By The Holiday
Since Kyrgyzstan gained its independence from the former USSR in 1991 the politicians and city dwellers are still trying to discover their own identity. However, the Kyrgyz pastoral majority still cling to a traditional way of life, grazing flocks on the high pastures during the brief summer months, then abandoning their yurts for the relative comfort of small villages in the harsh winter. Ethnic Kyrgyz make up the majority of the country’s 5.7 million people, followed by significant minorities of Uzbeks and Russians.

The tour starts from Bishkek with a vehicle transfer to avoid a busy road and a long tunnel. We start cycling into the Suusamyr valley and alongside the Kökömeren River to the district town of Chaek. Continuing on to the mining town of Kara Keche, we will cross several high passes, many over 3,000m, before descending to Son Kul Lake, the second largest lake in Kyrgyzstan. It is situated in a valley between two mountain ranges at the altitude of 3,016m. We will spend two nights beside the lake, staying in traditional felt yurts, usually occupied by nomadic herdsmen. They vacate their homes to provide accommodation for our group and will also cook our meals.

From the lake we will cycle over the beautiful Kalmak-Ashuu pass (3,450m) where we are likely to see yaks and marmots, with a long winding descent to Tolok before reaching the tarmac road and the turn to the town of Kochkor, the centre of felt making.

From Kochkor we cycle alongside the Orto-Tokoy reservoir then turn towards the south shore of Issyk Kul Lake, the second largest alpine lake in the world at an altitude of 1,607m. It is fed by numerous rivers, springs and snow melt. The lake's southern shore is dominated by the ruggedly beautiful Teskey Ala-Too range of the Tian Shan mountains. We will cross more passes before cycling to Bokonbaevo and to our final yurt camp near the shoreline of Issyk Kul Lake. We then transfer by vehicle back to Bishkek.

Potential participants should consider the realities of a wilderness adventure such as this with its almost complete lack of creature comforts and the long distance to medical facilities. The roads are often rough and unsealed and, as with all mountain roads, there may be a need to re-route, which could
increase the day’s planned distance. The support vehicles will be on-hand to move the group should the need arise.

Rides & Rest Days
This is a unique, adventurous and sometimes demanding tour best suited to experienced enthusiast adventure cyclists with a pioneering spirit. Riding surfaces will include dirt/gravel roads, grassy and possibly muddy tracks, rocky ascents and descents over passes in excess of 3,000m in height. The daily distances of 25 - 85km are reasonable to allow for the difficult terrain. Although not technical mountain biking, good bike handling skills over a variety of terrain will be required. Vehicle assistance will be available if required. It may be necessary to change the itinerary should conditions dictate.

Accommodation & Meals
We will stay in a small hotel in Bishkek at the start and finish of the tour and spend four nights in rural guesthouses. At some locations it may not be possible for the whole group to stay in the same guesthouse necessitating the need for some of the group to sleep in nearby houses. All meals, however, will be taken together. The remaining nights will be spent in remote shepherd’s yurts or tents. Hot water will not always be available for washing and toilet facilities will usually consist of a single drop-toilet.

The number of people sharing rooms in the guesthouses and in the yurts and tents will depend upon the gender mix of the group but could be up to four in the guesthouses and yurts and up to two in the tents. It cannot be guaranteed that couples will share at all locations.

All meals at the guesthouses and yurt camps will be freshly prepared by the owners whilst our support crew will prepare our meals for the one night that we wild camp. Meals tend to consist of eggs, soups, salads, noodles and dumplings with a plentiful supply of breads, jams, biscuits and sweets. Lunches will be taken in cafe/bars along the route or in the more remote areas will consist of picnics prepared by our support crew. On the shorter days we will have lunch in the guesthouses or yurts at our destination. Participants with any special dietary requirements are asked to contact the Tour Manager prior to booking.

Group Information
The maximum group size will be 13 excluding the Tour Manager.

Weather & Clothing
Kyrgyzstan experiences extremes of weather all year round. During the tour we are likely to encounter temperatures of up to 30° in strong sunshine but this could drop to near freezing, particularly at night, when staying in the yurt camps and when camping at high altitude. Rain, hail and even snow cannot be ruled out. It is essential, therefore, that you bring clothing suitable for all conditions plus a 3-4 season sleeping bag for the one night of wild camping.

Cycles & Equipment
A lightweight mountain bike, preferably with front suspension and minimum 50mm tyres, will be most suitable. A sturdy tourer or cyclocross bike with the widest tyres you can fit may also be suitable but only if you have previously and confidently used it on rough and steep terrain. If in any doubt about the suitability of your bike, please contact the Tour Manager. You will not need to carry luggage, but a bar bag or rack-top pack will be useful for spare clothing, camera, sun lotion, snacks etc. You should be able to carry two water bottles.

Your luggage and bike will be loaded into vehicles and transported over rough ground. Please bear this in mind when packing. Smart luggage will not be suitable and paint damage to your bike could occur. You could minimise this by the application of tape or pipe lagging to your frame. You will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. Once we leave Bishkek cycle spares will not be available.

The wearing of a cycle helmet is mandatory on this tour due to the rough and remote terrain and the long distances and time involved to reach any form of medical facilities in the event of a serious accident.

If you would prefer not to fly with your bike, rental bikes (usually Giant mountain bikes with front suspension) are available via our local agent in Bishkek. For further details, please contact the Tour Manager.

Maps & Guides
A map showing an outline of each days route, a set of daily route sheets, altitude profiles and gpx tracks will be provided. The Bradt Travel Guide to Kyrgyzstan (ISBN: 13 978 1 84162 856 1) provides useful background information.

Travel Insurance & Advice
Before booking you should check the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice or on 0845 850 2829.

Other Information
Money
There will be very few opportunities to spend money other than in Bishkek. Euro notes can be exchanged for the Kyrgyz som during the walking tour of Bishkek at the start of the holiday.

Tour Manager's Contact Details
If you require any assistance, or have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact the Tour Manager using the information provided below.

Michael Stainer

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