

The 4 Stans Itinerary

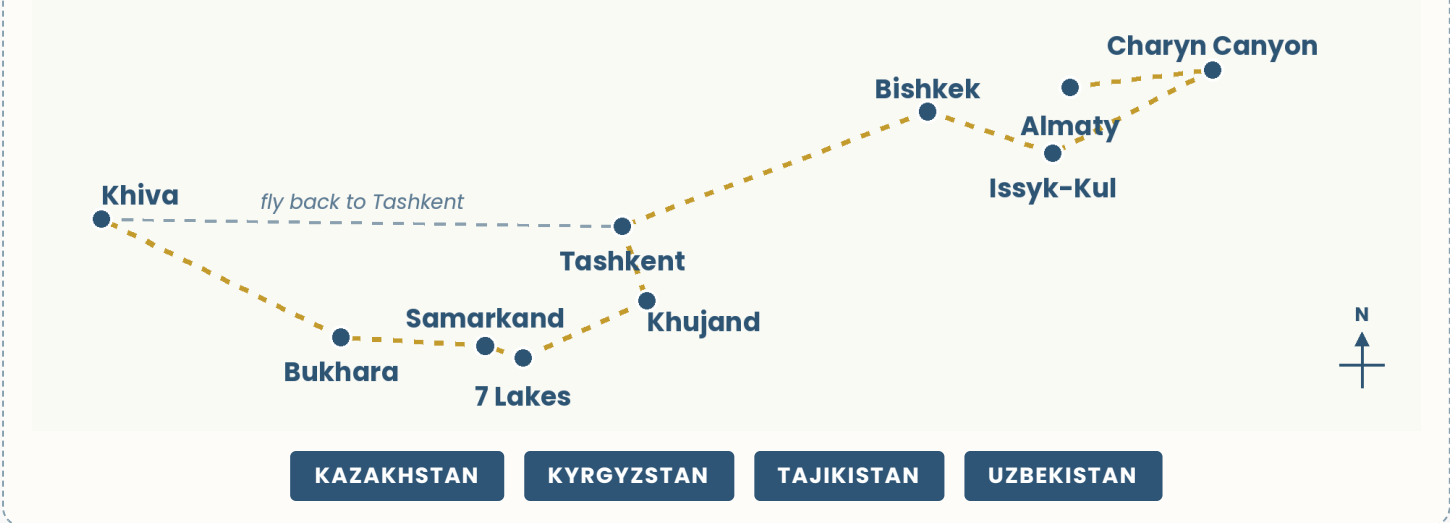
17 days, 4 countries, start to finish: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Here's exactly where I went, what I booked, and how to do it yourself.

[Just want the tour? See it here →](#)

[Or read the full written itinerary on the blog →](#)



My Route



The Itinerary

KAZAKHSTAN

Almaty

Ascension (Zenkov) Cathedral, the Central State Museum, Independence Monument, and the Green Market for dried fruit and bread. Then up the gondola into the mountains at Shymbulak, Kazakhstan's big ski resort, for some of the best views of the whole first few days.

Charyn Canyon

A red-rock canyon that feels like a mini Grand Canyon, about a 2.5-hour drive from Almaty. We hiked the upper trail with the group, about 2 miles down into the canyon and back up, and it's a lot more dramatic in person than any photo does justice to.



KYRGYZSTAN

Karakol & Issyk-Kul's south shore

Seven Bulls viewpoint, Broken Heart Rock, and Fairytale (Skazka) Canyon, a stretch of red and gold rock formations that looks almost painted on. Then a night in a yurt camp right on the shore of Issyk-Kul, one of the biggest alpine lakes in the world.

Bishkek

Burana Tower (an 11th-century minaret with a field of old balbal stones around it), archery, and a walk through the city. Grandpas playing chess in the park at 7:30pm might be the cutest thing I saw on the whole trip. Ended with the gondola up and a hike through Ala Archa National Park, right in Bishkek's backyard.



TAJIKISTAN

Khujand & Penjikent

Crossed the border into Khujand: Sughd Region Museum, Khujand Fortress, and the huge, colorful Panjshanbe Bazaar, good for just wandering and snacking. Then a long, dramatic mountain pass drive to Penjikent, with the kind of switchback views you keep stopping the car for.

The Seven Lakes

Went to all seven, each one a different shade of blue or turquoise depending on the mineral content. The last one takes a rough dirt road plus a short walk to reach, but it's the best of the bunch and worth saving your energy for.



UZBEKISTAN

Tashkent

The Hazrati Imam complex (gold doors, intricate tilework, all of it), Chorsu Bazaar for spices and dried fruit, Independence Square, and the metro stations, which are basically underground art galleries, each one with its own theme and chandeliers.

Samarkand

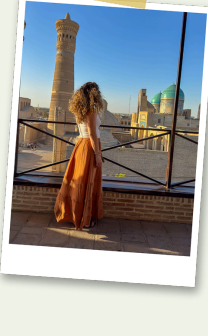
Registan Square, Shah-i-Zinda, Gur-i Amir, and the free lightshow at Registan after dark. Registan was one of my favorite stops on the whole trip, the scale of it is hard to grasp until you're standing in the middle of the square.

Bukhara

Ark of Bukhara, the Poi Kalyan complex, Chor Minor, and a Sufi shrine just outside town. Bukhara's old town is smaller and quieter than Samarkand's, good for just wandering the rooftop terraces and courtyards without a packed schedule.

Khiva

The whole walled Old Town: Kuhna Ark, madrassahs turned into hotels and shops, and the Kalta Minor minaret, which, according to local legend, was meant to be the tallest in the region before construction stopped early. Then flew back to Tashkent to close the loop.



Book the Exact Trip

This whole route (minus my extra time in Kazakhstan) is **Steppe Journeys'** Central Asia 17-day tour. I was invited on this trip and it did not disappoint, every stop above is exactly what they run. If you don't want to bother piecing together 17 days of logistics yourself, this is the no-brainer version.

[See the Tour](#)

Wandering the Stans Yourself?



I also spent extra time solo in Kazakhstan before the tour started, road tripping out to [Altyn Emel](#) and the turquoise [Kolsai & Kaindy Lakes](#), plus a stretch out in East Kazakhstan. This is just a quick guide, full country-by-country guides with all the details and links are coming soon.

KAZAKHSTAN

Charyn Canyon Day Trip from Almaty

[Book it](#)

KAZAKHSTAN

Almaty Walking Tour

[Book it](#)

KYRGYZSTAN

Burana, Canyons & Issyk-Kul Day Trip

[Book it](#)

KYRGYZSTAN

2-Day Issyk-Kul: Waterfall, Canyon & Yurt Stay

[Book it](#)

TAJIKISTAN

One Day Tour of the Seven Lakes

[Book it](#)

TAJIKISTAN

2-Day Fann Mountains: Voru Village & Seven Lakes

[Book it](#)

UZBEKISTAN

Tashkent Guided Walking & Food Tour

[Book it](#)

UZBEKISTAN

Samarkand Walking Tour + Coffee Break

[Book it](#)

UZBEKISTAN

Bukhara Small Group Walking Tour

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UZBEKISTAN

Khiva: Ichan Kala Walking Tour

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