



Silk Road to Russia

Farm Study Tour 2018

| DATE | ACTIVITY | OVERNIGHT |
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| DAY 1 Tue, Jul 24 (Meals on plane) | Tour leader: David Dowling 0437 000 234 Depart Australian cities for Chengdu, a major city in southwestern China. It will be a late evening arrival, so it will be straight to the hotel to rest up and prepare for a great adventure ahead. | CHINA Chengdu Tianfu Sunshine Hotel Website |
| DAY 2 Wed, Jul 25 (B,L,D) | We'll get together for a leisurely breakfast before embarking for the day's program. Chengdu is the home of the Giant Panda breeding centre – the best way to get up close to these amazing animals. We will also visit the Dujiangyan Irrigation System, a huge engineering project, built over 2,000 years ago with tens of thousands of workers. It saved the area from floods and made Sichuan the most productive agricultural area in the country – and it still works today. | Chengdu Tianfu Sunshine Hotel  |
| DAY 3 Thu, Jul 26 (B,L,D) | Morning flight to Urumqi, the capital of the far northwest Chinese province of Xinjiang. Xinjiang is booming with huge agricultural areas, oil and gas fields and vast renewable energy projects. For the cotton growers on the trip, Xinjiang produces around 10 million bales of high quality cotton each year which forms the basis of a rapidly expanding domestic cotton spinning and manufacturing industry. From the airport, we will travel past the biggest wind farm facility in China to Turpan on the northern edge of the Taklamakan Desert. The Turpan depression is the lowest point in China and the second lowest in the world, and the city was one of the major re-supply points on the old Silk Road. Turpan is one of the most interesting agricultural areas in the world. Apart from some great modern irrigation farms, we will visit the Karez irrigation system, an ancient (3000 years old) underground system of around 5000 km of channels to use the snow melt from the Tian Shan mountains to irrigate the arid but fertile soils. Both the ancient and modern irrigation systems are the basis of a huge area of cotton, grain and grapes. | Turpan Huozhou Hotel |
| DAY 4 Fri, Jul 27 (B,L,D) | An early start to visit the Turpan livestock market. Every Friday villagers from all around Turpan bring their livestock to be sold or traded. It's a lively event with plenty of noise, smells and snacks to keep you entertained. Then we will visit farms on the way to the Flaming Mountains – and if time permits, we will also call in on the ancient city of Jiaohe In the cool of the evening we join the Turpan locals as they gather in the Old Town square with family and friends to chat about the day and eat a dinner of Uyghur kebabs, bread, noodles and maybe a nice cold drink or two. | Turpan Huozhou Hotel |
| DAY 5 Sat, Jul 28 (B,L) | We visit Grape Valley this morning where we try some famous Turpan raisins before returning to Urumqi and a short city tour. After lunch, our guide will take us through the Grand Bazaar and surrounding markets to take in the sights and sounds, and maybe grab a bargain. Free evening. | Urumqi Grand Mercure Urumqi Hualing Hotel Website |
| DAY 6 Sun, Jul 29 (B,L,D) | After breakfast, we will head west on an excellent Chinese road with a visit to a large irrigation farm growing cotton and other crops before we have lunch near Kuytun. In the afternoon, we visit more farms then return to Urumqi to freshen up before dinner and a briefing on Xinjiang agriculture from local officials. | Urumqi Grand Mercure Urumqi Hualing Hotel |

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| DAY 7 Mon, Jul 30 (B,L,D) | <p>Today we fly to Kuqa in Western Xinjiang. Kuqa is located on the northern edge of the Taklamakan desert and was another major stop on the old Silk Road. The region has a fascinating mix of cultures – mainly Uyghur, Mongol and Kazakh, although more Han Chinese are settling here.</p> <p>Kuqa has a lot of authentic Uyghur culture. Its Old Town remains mostly intact, which makes it a fun place to walk around and enjoy Uyghur life and the ancient architecture.</p> | Kuqa Lidu Hotel  |
| DAY 8 Tue, Jul 31 (B,L,D) | <p>After breakfast, we will head into a southern arm of the magnificent Tian Shan mountains with a stopover at the Tianshan Mysterious Grand Canyon where twisting red sandstone walls create some great visual effects.</p> <p>Near Bayinbuluke we will visit Swan Lake which lies in a scenic area surrounded by the snow capped mountains. Each year, thousands of swans come to spend the summer before they migrate to the south. We will then visit a local sheep farm before arriving at our Bayinbuluke hotel.</p> | Bayinbuluke White Swan Hotel  |
| DAY 9 Wed, Aug 1 (B,L,D) | <p>After breakfast, we head through some breathtakingly beautiful grassland and mountain scenery towards the Ili Valley. With luck, we may witness a game of Buzkashi (or Kokpar) in which teams of horsemen wrestle for control of a headless goat with the aim of depositing it into a hole at the end of the "field."</p> <p>We might also come across a wedding or bridal party photo shoot – people travel from Urumqi and beyond to take advantage of the spectacular backdrops available. In the Ili Valley, we visit farms growing maize and wheat before continuing onto Nalati and its famous grasslands.</p> | Nalati Grassland Holiday Resort  |
| DAY 10 Thu, Aug 2 (B,L,D) | <p>Today we will visit local nomadic herders and a Merino sheep farm around Nalati before driving down the fertile and scenic Ili valley to Yining (also called Ili).</p> <p>Along the way we will visit the largest (sorghum) liquor making factory in Xinjiang as well as productive grain and fruit farms. In the markets and bazaars of Yining, you can get a sense of the more than 20 major ethnic groups which inhabit this region of western China.</p> <p>For dinner we can sample the fresh lamb kebabs straight from the local open grills.</p> | Yining Yining Longxing Hotel |
| DAY 11 Fri, Aug 3 (B,L,D) | <p>From Yining, we follow the Ili valley for a couple of hours, skirt the Kazakhstan border, and call in to the famous Fruit Valley. This is a mountain pass that serves as an important gateway between Ili and the outside world. From the bottom of the valley to the mountain slopes on either side, visitors can simultaneously enjoy the scenery of all four seasons.</p> <p>This area is known not only for its natural beauty, but also for the abundance of wild fruit trees, especially apple trees. Apples from the Fruit Valley are one of the Ili region's most famous exports. From here, it is a short drive – along a road featuring some modern engineering marvels – to Sayram lake.</p> <p>At 2000 metres above sea level, Sayram lake is the largest alpine lake in Xinjiang, with an area of 450 square km and a depth of 85 metres. Due to the high altitude and cold climate, the average temperature of the lake is just 5°C. The placid water stretches far into the distance, and gives the impression of connecting seamlessly with the blue sky. It is surrounded by wildflowers and vast grasslands, which provide ideal grazing land for the local Uygher, Kazak and Mongolian herdsmen. The pastures are dotted with the yurts of the herdsmen, and sheep and goats amble around at a leisurely pace.</p> <p>We will have time to explore the lake surrounds before an evening around the campfire with the local people. Overnight in a traditional yurt (tent).</p> | Sayram Lake Uygher Yurt  |

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| DAY 12 Sat, Aug 4 (B,L,D) | <p>After breakfast, we will backtrack a little to Khorgas for our border crossing into Kazakhstan. Khorgas is known as the biggest dry port in the world and is a key plank in the Chinese strategy to open efficient road and rail trading links to Central Asia and Europe. Khorgas was also an important staging post on the old Silk Road and has a similar role in this 'new' Silk Road.</p> <p>We will know immediately we are in Kazakhstan by the bumpiness of the road and the reduced speed of travel. The journey may be slow but the end result is well worth it as we arrive in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, and spectacularly located against the mountains.</p> <p>Our local guide will show us around Almaty and stay with us throughout Kazakhstan. Kazakh and Russian are spoken almost interchangeably through the country.</p> | <p>KAZAKHSTAN Almaty Hotel Rixos Website</p>  |
| DAY 13 Sun, Aug 5 (B,L) | <p>We have a brief guided tour of this modern, European style city before we venture into the mountains for some spectacular scenery and lunch at the Shymbulak Ski Resort.</p> <p>Then we enjoy some free time in Almaty to do our own exploration of the city.</p> | <p>Almaty Hotel Rixos</p> |
| DAY 14 Mon, Aug 6 (B,L,D) | <p>We will take a morning flight to Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan and meet with an old friend of <i>Greenmount Travel</i>, Madina Brimzhanova. Madina is an agronomist/consultant who has visited Australia several times.</p> <p>We tour this rapidly growing, well planned city. Most of the spectacular architecture, parks and public buildings can be visited in a walking tour from our central hotel.</p> | <p>Astana Diplomat Hotel Website</p>  |
| DAY 15 Tue, Aug 7 (B,L,D) | <p>After breakfast, we will fly to Kostenay in northern Kazakhstan. This is a very impressive broadacre cropping region and only about 150 km from the Russian border. We will meet with farmers and researchers at the Kostenay Mechanisation Institute which promotes new technology to local farmers.</p> <p>This afternoon we visit a local farm and meet with some enthusiastic locals. And get ready to answer plenty of questions about your own farming operation or business – these farmers are hungry for information.</p> <p>We'll spend some time socialising with the locals in the evening.</p> | <p>Kostanay Tobol Hotel</p> |
| DAY 16 Wed, Aug 8 (B,L,D) | <p>Today will visit some massive grain farms in northern Kazakhstan and talk to the farmers about the area's wonderful natural advantages which produce some big crops. But we'll also learn about the logistical and bureaucratic problems which make the farmer's lives very difficult.</p> <p>We cross the border into Russia and continue on to Chelyabinsk.</p> | <p>RUSSIA Chelyabinsk</p> |
| DAY 17 Thu, Aug 9 (B,L,D) | <p>Tour of Chelyabinsk in the morning before visiting some large farms in the area. We then continue on to Yekaterinburg with farm visits along the way.</p> <p>On arrival in Yekaterinburg, we will have a short city and local area sightseeing tour with a visit to the Europe/Asia 'borderline' (The Urals)</p> | <p>Yekaterinburg Atrium Palace Hotel Website</p> |
| DAY 18 Fri, Aug 10 (B,L,D) | <p>This morning, we board our first class sleeper carriage on the Trans Siberian Railway for a relaxing and scenic journey to Moscow.</p> <p>While on the trains throughout this rail tour, your ticket entitles you to one hot meal per day - other meals are available for purchase in the buffet car.</p> | <p>On train</p>  |
| DAY 19 Sat, Aug 11 (B,L,D) | <p>We arrive in Moscow mid-morning and will be met by a local guide and enjoy a city tour (approx 3 hours) to get our bearings. Transfer to the Metropol Hotel (5* hotel opposite the Bolshoi) at around 3 pm and check in.</p> <p>There are some famous sights to visit while in Moscow including Red Square, Lenin's Tomb, the Kremlin, the Armory, the famous domes of St Basil, Moscow River boat cruise and so on. A ride on the architecturally magnificent metro system is a must while the Military museum is also highly recommended.</p> | <p>Moscow Metropol Hotel Website</p> |

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| DAY 20 Sun, Aug 12 (B,D) | Breakfast then a guided walking excursion to the Kremlin and other sights (approx 2 hours). Then a free afternoon for some more sightseeing, recharge the batteries or some last minute shopping. Then a farewell dinner in the evening. | Moscow Metropol Hotel |
| DAY 21 Mon, Aug 13 (B) | Flights back to Australia (arriving home Tuesday, Aug 14), or continue the adventure with add-on travel to St Petersburg or to other parts of Europe. See below for details of the St Petersburg add-on option or contact <i>Greenmount Travel</i> . | |

TOUR COST: \$14,250 pp twin share. Single supplement (room to yourself) – add \$1600

TOUR INCLUSIONS...

- All international and internal flights (economy class) including taxes and airport charges that can be included on the pre-purchased air ticket. International flights are based on departure from any east coast of Australia capital. Tour costs for Perth departures can vary slightly up or down depending on destination. We can also offer a range of premium economy and business class flight options. If you book your own international flights using FF points or other arrangements, the economy class flight cost built into the Farm Study Tour is deducted from the final tour price;
- First class, centrally located city accommodation (best available in regional areas) with full buffet breakfast;
- Farm and other technical visits;
- Most lunch and evening meals are included and are of the highest standard. Meals are designed to showcase the best of the regional food and wines. Some evenings will be left free to sample some of the great local restaurants at your leisure;
- Local, as well as our own, experienced Greenmount Travel guides/translators accompany the group to ensure any problems that may arise are quickly fixed;
- Private first class charter coach and experienced drivers; and,
- Park and site entries, transfers, etc mentioned on the itineraries.

Visit the website (www.greenmounttravel.com.au) for terms and conditions and for other *Greenmount Travel* tours.

St Petersburg add-on option

If you are interested in continuing on with your travels and visiting St Petersburg (and beyond?), the following is a suggested itinerary. There are numerous options but, from previous experience, this one works well.

The additional (and approximate) per person cost on a double/twin share basis would be around US\$1000.

This would include first rate accommodation (with breakfast), Moscow to St Petes train ticket, transfers and private guiding. Apart from breakfast, all meals would be your own arrangements.

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| DAY 21 Mon, Aug 13 (B) | THIS DEPARTURE DATE ASSUMES 2 NIGHTS IN MOSCOW WITH THE MAIN GROUP BEFORE HEADING TO ST PETERSBURG. YOU MAY WANT TO EXTEND YOUR STAY IN MOSCOW WHICH IS VERY EASY TO ARRANGE. This morning you are transferred to Moscow train station to enjoy a 5 hour express train journey through magnificent forests, farmlands and small villages, to St Petersburg (all in daylight). You will be met at the train station by your local guide and before checking into your downtown hotel, you will be taken on a brief city tour to get your bearings. Free evening. | St Petersburg An excellent hotel for location and quality is the Petro Palace Website |
| DAY 22 Tue, Aug 14 (B) | Today your local guide will take you on a full day tour of this beautiful and historic city dubbed the 'Venice of the North' because of its palace-lined waterways. Miraculously, St Petersburg escaped the Stalinist architectural incursions (and perversions), and stands majestically on the Gulf of Finland and Neva River. Sights highly recommended to visit over the next few days include the magnificent State Hermitage buildings and the Hidden Treasures (includes priceless artworks captured by the Red Army), Peter and Paul Fortress, Nevsky Prospekt, Catherine the Great's Summer Palace and the magnificent Amber Room. | St Petersburg |
| DAY 23 Wed, Aug 15 (B) | You can opt for a free day today to do your own exploration of St Petes or you can do some more sightseeing with your local guide. On an agricultural note, St Petes is the home of the Vavilov Research Institute of Plant Industry – the world's first seed bank. Nikolai Vavilov, a Russian biologist, botanist and geneticist, scoured five continents in the 1920s and 1930s and amassed a vast collection of wild and cultivated seeds of food crops. Stalin imprisoned Vavilov in 1940. His 'crime' was that plant genetics was seen as a science that supports "inborn class differences". One year later, Hitler's army blockaded Leningrad (now St Petersburg). While guarding the collection, some Vavilov Institute scientists starved to death rather than eat the precious seed collections. | St Petersburg |
| DAY 24 Thu, Aug 16 (B) | Transfer to the airport today for your flight/s home – or if you are keen to continue on with your travels: Tallin, the capital of Estonia (one of the fantastic Baltic states) is about a 7 hour (in daylight) train ride away from St Petes. If the Nordic countries appeal, there are also ferry services from St Petes to Helsinki (Finland). The journey takes around 15 hours. | |