

Celestial Mountain Trail

KYRGYZSTAN

This adventurous **trail ride** journeys through a very wild area of Kyrgyzstan. In the homeland of the famed "celestial horses" which were coveted by Chinese emperors, your route follows that of local herders and shepherds, passing through their pasture-lands dotted with yurts. Ride over passes at 3,800m, across rivers and past emerald blue lakes within the Tien Shan mountain range.

Trail Riding	 15 days / 11 days riding	 From £1,885	
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ITINERARY


Highlights

- The magnificent endless horizons of the Tien Shan mountain range
- Follow part of the Silk Road to China, through valleys forged by ancient glaciers
- Experience the semi-nomadic traditions of local Kyrgyz herders and be welcomed into their yurts
- A 100% Kyrgyz team who have invested in local development initiatives and ecotourism projects
- The varied and exceptionally rich flora of the Tien Shan mountain pastures

Day 1 — 1: OVERNIGHT FLIGHT TO BISHKEK

International flight to Bishkek, arriving the following day. Please note flights are not included but can be booked on request.

Day 2 — 2: BISHKEK - BARSKOON - No riding

 Family Guesthouse

You will likely arrive into Bishkek in the early hours of the morning. You will be met at the airport and transferred directly to the village of Barskoon (c. 4-5 hours). The road follows the rich valley of Chui and you stop for lunch near a lake where it may be possible to swim in the clear, warm waters.

On arrival at Barskoon you will be welcomed by your guides family and will overnight in a rustic guesthouse.

Please note that it would be ideal to arrive at the airport around 5-6:00 am. If you arrive earlier, you will need to wait until all of the other riders have arrived. Breakfast is not included as most riders will have had breakfast in the plane.

Day 3 — 3: KOK-BULAK - SARAY BULAK (2,550M) - 5-6 hours riding



Set out on your horse riding trail towards Tarylga river. Cross Chon-Jargylchak river in order to reach the grazing pastures ("jailoo") of Kok-Bulak where you will have your first opportunity for a canter. You should have impressive views of Lake Issyk Kul to the north and the snowy peaks of the Tien Shan mountains to your south.

Camp in the Sary-Bulak valley close to the river.

Day 4 — 4: KICHY-JARGYLCHAK VALLEY - KOK BELL - 6 hours riding



Continue riding eastwards and climb up the Kichy-Jargylchak valley and through pine forests into the heart of the mountains. View the distant Akterek glacier and perhaps stop at a shepherd's yurt to sample your first taste of koumiss.

Camp in the Kok Bell valley.

Day 5 — 5: KASHKA SUU - JYLUU-SUU - JUKKUU - 6 hours riding



Ford the river and ride through the Kashka Suu valley until reaching the hot springs at Jyluu-Suu where you stop for lunch. In the afternoon you continue riding through the broad Jukkuu valley until reaching your campsite. Here you join one of the major Silk Roads which led from Kyrgyzstan into China.

Day 6 — 6: UPPER JUUJU VALLEY - VIEW OF ITISH PEAK (4808m) - 4-5 hours riding



Today you will set off riding towards the Celestial mountains and follow along the Juuku River. You will likely meet more shepherds with their herds. As you gain altitude the impressive It-Tish Mountain Peak looms overhead at 4808 m..

Camp overnight in tents in the Chong-Tash Valley.

Day 7 — 7: JUUKU PASS - ARABEL PLATEAU - 5 hours riding



Follow a path through the forest and out onto an ancient plateau. You leave the forest behind at 2,800m but continue ascending along scree paths until crossing the pass at 3,633m. Here you have spectacular views of the immense plateaus, meandering rivers and peaceful mountain lakes. Descend slightly to camp beside a lake at 3,500m amidst a sea of snowy peaks.

Day 8 — 8: TARAGAI RIVER - 4-5 hours riding



Ride across the high plateau which is scattered with Marco Polo sheep and numerous marmots. In this remote valley you will come across the surreal sight of Kumtor gold mine. Still encircled by the snow-capped Tien Shan mountains you camp by the Taragai river under a star filled sky.

Day 9 — 9: TARAGAI RIVER BRIDGE – JAMAN-ECHKI VALLEY - 5 hours riding



Today you ride along the Taragai River. You will reach Jaman-Echki Valley after crossing a large bridge. You will experience big open spaces and enjoy views off the Tien-Shan mountain range on both sides of Taragai River.

Day 10 — 10: JAMAN-ECHKI PASS – BURHAN VALLEY - 5 hours riding



Your ride today goes over the Jaman-Echki Pass and down to Burhan valley. This valley is a summer pasture for many shepherds and their herds. You may stop at some shepherd's yurts and taste "Kymyz" (the national drink made from mare's milk). Whistling marmots pop up from the rocks on every side to watch your group of horseback riders and send their alarm call to their fellows. This evening you will camp by the Kok-Jar River.

Day 11 — 11: JYLUU-SUU VALLEY - 5 hours riding



Today you continue along the same valley of Burhan. Every now and then you pass a lone yurt – home to a family for the summer.

Day 12 — 12: UCH-EMCHEK VALLEY – KALCHA RIVER - 6 hours riding



Today’s ride is easy but long. As you make your way gently up along the wide Uch-Emchek Valley, you may see the occasional yurt. You will pass separate herds of yak, horses, cows, sheep and goats. Camp next to the Kalcha River.

Day 13 — 13: KEREGE-TASH PASS (3684m.) – SARY-MOINOK PASS (3128m.) - BARSKOON - 4 hours riding



Tosor Pass (3800 m) will stay on our left side while you ride up to Chunkur-Kol Mountain Lake. Then from Karage-T ash Pass (3684m.) you ride down along the river to Sary-Moinok (3128m.) Descend to Arabel valley and say goodbye to your horses.

You will be transferred by car to Barskoon where you will again be greeted by your guides family and can have a relaxing bath before a traditional meal.

Day 14 — 14: BARSKOON - BISHKEK - No riding

You will be transferred back to Bishkek, stopping for lunch en-route. In Bishkek there will be time to visit the bazaar of Osh - a colourful and lively market and worth the detour! Dinner is to your own account tonight before a short night in your hotel.

Day 15 — 15: DEPARTURE FROM BISHKEK

You will be transferred to the airport at the time that is most convenient for all of the riders, if your flight is outside the scheduled transfer, then you will need to take a taxi to the airport. Flights are not included.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
07/07/2024	21/07/2024	£1,885	Open
14/07/2024	28/07/2024	£1,885	Open
28/07/2024	11/08/2024	£1,885	Open
04/08/2024	18/08/2024	£1,885	Open
11/08/2024	25/08/2024	£1,885	Full

Price details

- Flights to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates.
- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin or double room/tent during the ride.
- Groups are composed of a minimum of 4 riders and a maximum of 6 international riders, plus guides.
- Prices are based on a group size of 4 or more riders. There is a small group supplement of €120/£102/\$130 per person payable if the group size is only 2 or 3 riders. Note - in 2024, this supplement is exceptionally waived.
- Airport transfers are included if arriving before 7 am (riders arriving early may have to wait). On the way back, a small fee (around €15/£10/\$20) is payable for the airport transfer if your flights are very different from the rest of the group.
- There is no single supplement and you must be prepared to share. The only exception is in Bishkek when it is possible to request a single room in the hotel for an additional c. €50/£45/\$60. In exceptional circumstances and depending on the group size, it may be possible to request an private tent at an extra cost.

- Rider weight limit is 85 kg / 187 lbs / 13 st 5 lbs. Heavier riders may be accommodated depending on horse availability, but must notify us before booking.

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

1 English speaking tour leader

1 kyrgyz expedition leader

LOGISTIC

1 vehicle and driver

1 cook

INLAND TRANSPORTS

Airport transfers

Private bus

ACCOMMODATION

2 person tents

Double room in hotel standard 2*

Yurt or double room in private home

MEALS

Full board from lunch on D2 to lunch D14

EXTRA

First aid kit

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverage and personal extra

Dinner not included on day 14

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurances are not included. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend to take out an insurance policy as soon as your travel is booked in case of cancellation.

Visa fees

International flights

EXTRA

Small group supplement if less than 4 riders

Tips to local team

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement (Bishkek)

Extra night in Bishkek (please contact us for rates)



Horses

The Kyrgyz horses are cross-breds between the "heavenly horses" of Russia (Orlov and Don valley) which are discussed in ancient texts and the English Thoroughbred. The resulting breed is sturdy, well balanced, rustic, tough and ideally suited for the rough terrain. They live freely in herds in the mountains and are c. 14.2 - 15.1hh.

Guide & local team

Your hosts and guides for the trail will be members of the Obolbekov family and they have worked for many years with our sister company in France - Cheval d'aventure. They all speak excellent English.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You need to be a capable rider who is used to riding outdoors and fit enough for some long hours in the saddle. You are riding in a very remote location across rugged terrain and there is no option to miss a day if you get tired.

Rider weight limit is 85 kg / 187 lbs / 13 st 5 lbs. Heavier riders may be accommodated depending on horse availability, but must notify us before booking.

PACE

The ride is not fast because of the altitude and steep terrain, but the flat plateaus and valley bottoms are conducive to some long canters - although some sections which look inviting may have too many marmot burrows and your guide will assess the conditions on the day.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

You will be asked to groom, tack and untack your own horse although help is on hand. You may also assist with feeding and watering the horses if you wish.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

You need to be fit and in good physical condition. You will be riding at altitude - between 1,600 and 3,800m - with some very rough terrain to cross and significant elevation changes throughout each day. There are some sections where you will need to dismount and lead your horse downhill. Please check with us if you have any medical conditions as you will be a long way from medical help.

You should be prepared for extremely changeable weather and the mountains could show you rain, hail, snow, wind and sun all within 24 hours

Your luggage will be transported by car during the trip.

Previous experience of riding a trail of several days is a definite advantage but is not required. Riders who do not ride regularly are requested to get riding fit prior to the start of their holiday.

The team has a satellite phone for emergencies.

Visiting a new country offers the opportunity to meet other cultures with different mentalities, therefore it is important to accept these differences and respect the local way of life.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Saddles are local and consist of a basic frame over which is thrown sheep or goat skins for comfort.

We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit. Helmets are mandatory.

COMFORT

During the trail you stay in two man tents and should take your own sleeping bags and mats.

In Barskoon you will share a room or yurt.

In Bishkek you stay in double or triple rooms with private bathrooms.

MEALS

The food is simple and abundant, using as many fresh ingredients as possible and prepared daily by the cook.

Breakfast consists of eggs, bread, cheese and dried fruits.

Lunch is a picnic and consists of bread, cheese, meat, fruit and chocolate.

Dinner often starts with a hot soup followed by a main of meat, salad, pasta, rice and followed by cheese, fruits or chocolate.

CLIMATE

The weather is likely to be changeable.

In Bishkek and at low altitudes it can be hot and dry, but in the mountains and at altitude you can experience many variations. It can be warm during the day but the temperature will drop to around zero or below at night. You could experience rain, hail or even snow as well as wind but the bad weather rarely lasts long. The area actually reports low rainfall throughout the year but you should be prepared with many warm layers and waterproof clothing.

TIPS

It is customary to tip but this is entirely at your discretion. In Bishkek you may wish to tip 10%, but on the trail we recommend c. £5 - £10 per person per day to be split amongst all the team.

PACKING LIST

You are riding at high altitude and the weather can be unpredictable, even in the summer. Please make sure to pack sensibly and bring enough warm clothing to get you through the ride! Warm jumpers or fleece jackets, waterproof gear and gloves are a must throughout the season.

Head

- Helmets are mandatory on the ride. We recommend that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana
- Warm hat for cold nights when camping

Upper body

- Thermals (long or short sleeved)
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold
- Swimming costume - for swimming/bathing in rivers/hot springs

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around the camp in the evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, cold or rain whilst riding. Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

Nightwear

- Sleeping bag. You need at least a comfort factor down to minus 15 celsius.
- Sleeping bag liner - silk, cotton or fleece - adds an extra layer
- Thermarest or similar sleeping mat for your comfort
- Pyjamas or tracksuits or thermals for sleeping in

Other useful items

- Towels - camping ones will both dry and pack more easily
- Small backpack for accessing items required during the day (carried by support crew)

- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Swiss army knife
- Field glasses
- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with
- Small plastic bags for rubbish
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)

In your hand luggage

- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.
- Your riding hat

Medical kit

- Any medication you regularly take
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing deet
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Re-hydration sachets
- Water purification tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel
- Micropur tablets to purify water

Miscellaneous

- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided with a capacity of 60-80 litres. We recommend taking a backpack or similar.
- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (passport, camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Tall riders may benefit from taking a pair of long stirrup leathers with them (the local stirrups are adjustable but are sometimes limited in length)
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals
- Please take your rubbish home with you. There are no recycling facilities in Kyrgyzstan, so take your used batteries, aerosols etc back home and dispose of them appropriately. Try to leave excess packaging material at home before travelling
- You may wish to take some photographs or postcards of your home with you to show your hosts. You may also wish to take some crayons, colouring books etc for the children

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .