



GROUP TOUR • 7 DAYS

Nomad's Culture Festival Tour

Round trip from Bishkek • Kyrgyzstan

Duration
7 days, 6 nights

Start and end
Round trip from Bishkek

Best time to visit
Jul–Aug

Group tour from
\$1,723 per person

Group size
Max 10 travellers

Tour type
Culture, Nature

Difficulty
Moderate

Departures
2 guaranteed dates

Prices and dates valid for 2027 departures. Issued 13 October 2026.

Tour highlights

A 7-day summer tour from Bishkek timed for one of Kyrgyzstan's festivals, with Issyk-Kul, Karakol and a night in a yurt at Song-Kol Lake. Each departure has its own festival day: the July trip goes to KolFest, an international music, arts and culture festival on the shore of Issyk-Kul Lake that brings together contemporary music, visual arts, film, fashion and creative people from Central Asia and the wider world, rooted in nomadic heritage and open to new ideas. The August trip goes to Salbuurun, where Kyrgyz people gather to celebrate and keep alive their hunting traditions.

At Salbuurun you watch berkutchi hunt with golden eagles and falcons from horseback alongside Taigan, the Kyrgyz greyhound, see archers in action and join craft master classes, national games and traditional performances – and taste Kyrgyz national cuisine. At KolFest the day is about music, art and meeting local and international creatives, with yoga, lake-side meditation and food courts on the shore.

Around the festival you discover Issyk-Kul, known as the pearl of Kyrgyzstan, and the Tian Shan on light hikes: the forests of Chon-Kemin, a trek in the Jyrgalan valley above Karakol, the red cliffs of Jeti-Oguz, the waterfalls of the Barskoon Gorge and the wind-carved rocks of Skazka Canyon. You share a dinner with a Uighur family, sleep in yurts on the shore of Issyk-Kul and beside the alpine lake of Song-Kol (3,016 m), and meet nomad families who welcome you with kymyz and the warm hospitality Kyrgyzstan is known for.

Difficulty: Moderate. Requires normal fitness. The main hike is a 4–5-hour trek in the Jyrgalan valley (start at 2,300 m, highest point 2,850 m); other walks are 1–3 hours, including an 8 km walk at Song-Kol Lake at about 3,000 m. Daily drives of 90–350 km and two nights in yurt camps.



Hunting Eagle landing to the hand of Kyrgyz eagle hunter



Yurt villages in Song Kul

Where you'll stay

Night 1	Chon Kemin	Kok-Archa guesthouse or similar
Nights 2–3	Karakol	Amir Hotel or similar
Night 4	Tamga Gorge	Yurt camp in Tamga
Night 5	Kochkor	Nomad Lodge Hotel or similar
Night 6	Song Kul	Yurt camp at Song Kol

Listed accommodation or similar, same category.

Day-by-day itinerary

DAY

1

Bishkek – Chon-Kemin (180 km, 2–3 hrs + stops)

In the morning, meet your guide at the hotel at 09:00 and transfer to Chon-Kemin Nature Park. The Chon-Kemin River rises in the Kungey Ala-Too and Trans-Ili Ala-Too ranges and flows 116 km through forested gorges and seven lakes before joining the Chu River. The area is protected as the Chon-Kemin State Nature Park, which covers 5,000 hectares and preserves unique flora and fauna such as the Tolai hare, pheasants and fir trees. The park's river basin remains largely untouched and offers a rich and diverse natural habitat.

On the way through the Chui Valley we stop at the historic Burana Tower, a landmark of the Great Silk Road dating back to the 11th century. On arrival at the mountain guesthouse, enjoy lunch, followed by a 2–3-hour walking excursion to a panoramic viewpoint. For those interested, horse riding is available at an additional cost. Dinner and overnight at the guesthouse.

Altitude: 800 m (Bishkek) □ 1,700 m (Chon-Kemin).

Overnight	Chon Kemin · Kok-Archa guesthouse or similar
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Meals	Dinner
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Travel	Bishkek – Chon Kemin (180 km)
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DAY

2

Chon-Kemin – Karakol (300 km, about 4 hrs + stops)

Transfer to Karakol along the north shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, with a visit to the open-air museum of petroglyphs in Cholpon-Ata.

Later, a picturesque drive takes us from the Grigorievskoe gorge over a small pass (2,360 m) to the Semenovskoe gorge. At the top of the pass you can hike for 1–2 hours (3–6 km, as the group wishes).

In the evening, a traditional dinner with a Uighur family (a small nation that emigrated from China). Overnight at the hotel in Karakol.

Altitude: 1,800 m (Karakol).

Overnight	Karakol · Amir Hotel or similar
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Meals	Breakfast, Dinner
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Travel	Chon Kemin – Karakol (300 km)
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DAY

3

Karakol – Jyrgalan valley – Karakol (60 km each way, about 1 hr 20 min)

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the Jyrgalan gorge (60 km). The trek in the Jyrgalan gorge takes about 4–5 hours and rewards you with a beautiful view over the gorge from the top of the mountain at Turnaly-Kol. Optionally, visit the hot spring in Jyrgalan on the way back.

Transfer back to Karakol. Dinner in a local restaurant and overnight at the hotel.

Trekking: 4–5 hours; start of the trek at 2,300 m, highest point 2,850 m. Altitude: 1,700 m (Karakol).

Overnight	Karakol · Amir Hotel or similar
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Meals	Breakfast, Dinner
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Travel	Karakol – Jyrgalan valley (60 km) Jyrgalan valley – Karakol (60 km)
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DAY
4

Karakol – Jeti-Oguz – Barskoon Gorge – yurt camp near Tamga (90 km, about 2.5 hrs + stops)

After breakfast, a city tour of Karakol with the Russian Orthodox church and the Dungan Mosque, a unique example of Chinese-influenced architecture. Then transfer to the Jeti-Oguz valley, whose name means "Seven Bulls" in Kyrgyz. This picturesque gorge is famous for its striking red sandstone formations surrounded by forests of Tian Shan spruce. A 30-minute walk (both ways) takes you to the best viewpoint of the iconic "Seven Bulls" rocks.

In the afternoon, visit the Barskoon Gorge on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, 90 km from Karakol. The gorge is known for its lush slopes, thick vegetation and three waterfalls, including the famous "Tears of the Snow Leopard", which plunges about 100 metres. A 30–40-minute walk (one way) leads to the first viewpoint. Afterwards, continue to the yurt camp on the shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, where you can swim and relax. Dinner and overnight at the yurt camp (two people per yurt, European-style toilets and showers).

Altitude: 1,600 m (yurt camp on Issyk-Kul Lake).

Overnight	Tamga Gorge · Yurt camp in Tamga
Meals	Breakfast, Dinner
Travel	Karakol – Tamga Gorge (90 km)

DAY
5

Yurt camp near Tamga – Skazka Canyon – festival day – Kochkor (170 km, 2.5 hrs + stops)

Festival day. Early in the morning, visit Skazka (Fairy Tale) Canyon, where the wind has shaped the colourful rocks into bizarre sculptures and formations over many years. Then transfer to the festival.

July departure – KolFest: an international music, arts and culture festival on the shore of Issyk-Kul, rooted in nomadic heritage and bringing together contemporary music, visual arts, film, fashion and creative people from Central Asia and around the world. You meet local and international bands, and the festival offers activities such as yoga, lake-side meditation and workshops. Food courts serve a wide variety of dishes.

August departure – Salbuurun: the festival of Kyrgyz hunting traditions. Hunters (berkutchi) show their golden eagles and falcons, archers and Taigan hounds perform, and there is a concert of folk music, national games and master classes by local craftsmen. A traditional lunch is a chance to taste Kyrgyz national cuisine.

In the afternoon, transfer to Kochkor for dinner and overnight at the guesthouse.

Altitude: 1,700 m (Kochkor).

Overnight	Kochkor · Nomad Lodge Hotel or similar
Meals	Breakfast, Dinner
Travel	Tamga Gorge – Kochkor (170 km)

DAY

6

Kochkor – Song-Kol Lake (150 km, about 3 hrs + stops)

Transfer to Song-Kol Lake, the highest lake in Kyrgyzstan at 3,016 m above sea level. This freshwater lake is home to various fish species and surrounded by majestic mountains. In summer, local nomads bring their families and livestock to graze on the rich pastures and live in traditional Kyrgyz yurts.

In the afternoon, enjoy a scenic walk of about 8 km along the north shore of the lake. On the way, visit local nomads and taste kymyz, a traditional drink made from mare's milk. Horse riding (2–3 hours) and a horse games show can be added at an extra cost. Dinner and overnight in a yurt camp (2–3 people per yurt, shared outdoor toilets and showers).

Walking: about 8 km. Altitude: 3,100 m (Song-Kol Lake).

Overnight	Song Kul · Yurt camp at Song Kol
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Meals	Breakfast, Dinner
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Travel	Kochkor – Song Kul (150 km)
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DAY

7

Song-Kol – Bishkek (350 km, 5–6 hrs + stops)

Breakfast and transfer to Bishkek. Arrival in Bishkek and end of services.

Altitude: 800 m (Bishkek).

Overnight	Departure day, no overnight
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Meals	Breakfast
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Travel	Song Kul – Bishkek (350 km)
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What's included

Included

- Transport for transfers and excursions in a good-condition car with A/C: for 2–3 travellers an English-speaking driver with a 4x4 jeep (Toyota Prado, Sequoia, Pajero or similar); for 4 or more travellers a Mercedes Sprinter (14 seats)
- English-speaking tour guide for groups of 4 or more travellers
- Accommodation in double/twin rooms in hotels and guesthouses; two people per yurt at the yurt camp near Tamga, 2–3 people per yurt at Song-Kol Lake
- Meals as shown in the programme: 6 breakfasts and 6 dinners
- Tickets to the festival (KolFest in July, Salbuurun in August)
- Entrance fees to cultural sites and nature parks
- Mineral water during the tour (1 litre per person)

Not included

- Accommodation and meals in Bishkek
- Airport pick-up and drop-off (50 USD per car for 1–3 travellers, per transfer)
- International and domestic flight tickets
- Kyrgyz visa fees, if a visa is needed
- Single room supplement: 165 USD per person (not available in the yurt camps)
- Horse riding at Song-Kol Lake (45 USD per person, 2–3 hours)
- Horse games show at Song-Kol Lake (350 USD per group)
- Horse riding in Chon-Kemin
- Lunches (full board)
- Folklore programme in Bishkek
- Alcohol and soft drinks
- Porter service at hotels and the airport
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Any changes to the programme

Prices and dates

Valid for 2027 departures

Group tour, per person

Tour	Double / twin room	Single supplement
7 days	\$1,723	+ \$165

Same price on all departures. \$225 deposit, balance one month before tour starting date.

Optional extras

- Horse riding at Song-Kol Lake (2–3 hours): \$45 per room
- Horse games show at Song-Kol Lake: \$350 per room
- Airport pick-up or drop-off (car for 1–3 travellers, per transfer): \$50 per room

Guaranteed group departures

2027

Start	End	Weekdays	Status
13 Jul 2027	19 Jul 2027	Tue – Mon	Available
3 Aug 2027	9 Aug 2027	Tue – Mon	Available

Availability as of 13 October 2026. Check current availability on the tour page.

Book or ask a question

Choose a date or ask us anything about this tour. We usually reply within one working day.

Tour page	central-asia.guide/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan-tours/nomads-culture-festival-tour
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