

Kyrgyzstan. General information on Kyrgyzstan

History of Kyrgyzstan, pictures of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan Travel Information

Kyrgyzstan, officially named the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyz Respublikasy), is a landlocked republic in the eastern part of Central Asia which is bordered in the north by Kazakhstan, in the east by China, in the south by China and Tajikistan, and in the west by Uzbekistan. Bishkek is the capital and largest city.

Kyrgystan

Name: Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyzstan

Geographic coordinates: 41 00 N, 75 00 E

Area: 199,900 sq km).

Land boundaries: Uzbekistan - 1,099 km, Kazakstan - 1,051 km, Tajikistan - 870 km, China - 858 km.

Climate: dry continental to polar in the high Tien Shan; subtropical in the southwest (Fergana Valley); temperate in northern foothill zone.

Internet domain: .kg

Money: National currency is the Som = 100 tyin

Government type: Republic

National capital: Bishkek

Administrative divisions: 6 regions and 1 city (shaar) Bishkek, Chuy Region (Chuy Oblasty), Jalal-Abad Region (Jalal-Abad Oblasty), Naryn Region (Naryn Oblasty), Osh Region (Osh Oblasty), Talas Region (Talas Oblasty), Issyk-Kul Region (Issyk-Kul Oblasty)

Independence: 31 August 1991 (from Soviet Union)

Constitution: adopted 5 May, 1993

Population: 5 663 100 (february, 2013)

Ethnic groups: Kyrgyz 72%, Russian 6.9%, Uzbek 14.3%, other 7%

Religions: Muslim 75%, Russian Orthodox 20%, other 5%

Languages: Kirghiz (Kyrgyz) - official language, Russian - official language (since 1996)

Time: GMT + 5 (GMT + 6 from second Sunday in April to Saturday before last Sunday in September).

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Round two-pin continental plugs are standard.

Flag of Kyrgyzstan

Aspect: 1:2. It is a red cloth. The center posted a picture of sun-yellow. At Sun posted a symbolic image of Kyrgyz yurta.

Adopted in 1992, the red flag symbolizes the valor and courage. The sun symbolizes peace and wealth, and the image yurta - a symbol of the country and the world.

Emblem of Kyrgyzstan

The coat of arms of Kyrgyzstan was adopted on 2 June, 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The coat of arms has a circular form and mostly bears the color blue, as light blue is the Kyrgyz color of courage and generosity (as on the flag and coat of arms of Kazakhstan). To the left and right of the coat of arms, wheat and cotton are displayed. In the upper part, the name of the country appears in Kyrgyz "Кыргыз Республикасы" (Kyrgyz Respublikasy).

History of Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz, a Turkic-speaking people, constitute a slim majority of the multi-ethnic population of Kyrgyzstan. The constitution enshrines Kyrgyz as the country's state language, although Russian continues to be used widely. Kyrgyzstan became part of the Russian Empire in the late 1800s. In 1924 it was incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as an autonomous region, and in

1936 its status was upgraded and it became one of the 15 constituent republics of the USSR, officially called the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). The republic was also commonly known as Kirgizia under Soviet rule, and Russians continue to call it that today. Kyrgyzstan became independent from the USSR in 1991. In 1993 the republic ratified its first post-Soviet constitution.

Location of Kyrgyzstan

The total area of Kyrgyzstan is 198,500 sq km (76,640 sq mi). The country is almost completely mountainous. More than half of Kyrgyzstan lies at an elevation higher than 2,500 m (8,200 ft), and only about one-eighth of the country is lower than 1,500 m (about 4,900 ft). Glaciers and permanent snowfields cover more than 3 percent of Kyrgyzstan's total land area. An underlying seismic belt causes frequent earthquakes.

Kyrgyzstan is located at the juncture of two great Central Asian mountain systems (the Tian-Shan and the Pamir). These two systems are geologically separated from each other in southern Kyrgyzstan, between the Alai Mountains of the Tian-Shan and the Trans-Alai Range (Qatorkuhi Pasi Oloy) of the Pamir. The Trans-Alai Range, which is the northernmost part of the Pamirs, forms part of Kyrgyzstan's southern border with Tajikistan. The main ridge of the Tian-Shan extends along Kyrgyzstan's eastern border with China, on a northeastern axis. Victory Peak (known as Pik Pobedy in Russian and Jenish Chokosu in Kyrgyz) is the highest peak in the Tian-Shan system at an elevation of 7,439 m (24,406 ft). Located on the Kyrgyz-China border in northeastern Kyrgyzstan, Victory Peak is also the highest point in Kyrgyzstan and the second highest peak in the former USSR. A series of mountain chains that are part of the Tian-Shan system, including the Alatau ranges, spur off into Kyrgyzstan. Most of these ranges run generally east to west, but the Fergana Mountains in the central portion of the country run southeast to northwest. The Fergana Valley in the west and the Chu Valley in the north are among the few significant lowland areas in Kyrgyzstan.

Rivers and Lakes

The Naryn River, Kyrgyzstan's largest river, originates in the mountains in the northeast and flows westward through the middle of the country. The Naryn then enters the Fergana Valley and crosses into Uzbekistan, where it joins with another river to form the Syr Darya, one of Central Asia's principal rivers. The Chu River, in northern Kyrgyzstan, flows northward into southern Kazakhstan. Yssyk-Kul, the largest lake in Kyrgyzstan and one of the largest mountain lakes in the world, is located at an altitude of 1,607 m (5,273 ft) above sea level in the northeastern portion of the country.

Flora and Fauna

Forests occupy 4 percent of the country's land area. Coniferous trees such as the Tian-Shan white spruce grow along lower valleys and on north-facing mountain slopes. Many rare animal species inhabit the woodlands, including the Tian-Shan bear, the red wolf, and the snow leopard, which are protected by government decree. Other animals in Kyrgyzstan include deer, mountain goats, and mountain sheep. Kyrgyzstan's mountain lakes are an annual refuge for thousands of migrating birds, including the mountain goose and other rare species.

Kyrgyzstan's landscape, blessed and bedevilled by a dramatic range of weather conditions and altitudes, supports an astoundingly rich diversity of plant and animal life. King of the mountains, the graceful, swift snow leopard - packed with muscle and sporting a long tail for balance - is finely honed to survive in snowbound peaks.

Marco Polo sheep, their horns comically coiled, tread the high mountains along with the world's largest ibex whose horns can reach 60 inches. The Tien Shan brown bear and grey wolves patrol the valleys near Bishkek and Karakol. But the visitor is most likely to see marmots - bundles of fur with shrill shrieks - and, if you're lucky, the giant (Menzbier) marmot which lives only in the Tien Shan.

Kyrgyzstan is renowned for its botanical diversity, with some 400 species exclusive to this country. Varieties of tulip, orchid and wild onion are unusually abundant and alpine plants, such as edelweiss, are the trekker's constant companion. The rare aigul flower grows in the Alai Range. The south boasts

globally important forests - including rare types of walnut and pistachio - testament to the untouched wildness of this extraordinary land.

Kyrgyzstan's natural resources include significant deposits of gold and other minerals. Also present are deposits of coal, uranium, mercury, antimony, nepheline, bismuth, lead, and zinc. Exploitable but small reserves of oil and natural gas also exist. The country's fast-flowing rivers provide hydroelectric power. Only 7 percent of the total land area is cultivated.

Climate

The country's climate varies by region. The climate is subtropical in the Fergana Valley and temperate in the northern foothill zone. The lower mountain slopes have a dry continental climate, as they receive hot desert winds from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, whereas the highest mountain elevations have a polar climate. In the valleys, the average daily temperature in July is 28° C (82° F). In January daily averages are as low as -14° C (7° F). Conditions are much colder at high elevations, where in July the average daily temperature is 5° C (41° F) and in January, -28° C (-18° F). Precipitation is between 100 and 500 mm (4 and 20 in) in the valleys and from 180 to 1,000 mm (7 to 40 in) in the mountains.

Public and national holiday:

January 1 - New Year

March 21 - Nouruz (Islamic New Year)

May 1 - Labor Day

May 5 - Constitution Day

May 9 - Victory Day

August 31 - Independence Day

December 2 - National Day

There are other religious holidays with varying dates:

"Orozo Ayt"

"Kurman Ayt"

OVIR registration

- OVIR is an abbreviation, which stands for the Visa and Registration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Kyrgyz law currently states that foreign citizens of some countries must register at local police stations (OVIR/OVD) within 5 days of arrival, including weekends and the date of arrival. As a general rule, citizens of countries that require visas to enter Kyrgyzstan will need to register within 5 days of entering the country. However, the government issued an order (No. 213, dated 15/04/03) which decreed that citizens of EU countries, USA, Canada and Australia in the country for up to one month no longer need register.

Money exchange

National currency is the Som = 100 tyin. The Kyrgyz economy is basically cash based and the US dollar is the most widely used foreign currency (the Euro and other currencies are commonly accepted). There are exchanges in all cities and most towns. The general advice is to bring US dollars if possible (new notes, post-1995 if possible; clean and unblemished).

Higher denominations bring better exchange rates but must be in near-mint condition. Cash advances on major credit cards (VISA/MasterCard) are available in several banks in Bishkek with about a 4% commission. Many banks now operate Western Union Money Transfer services.

History and people

History of Kyrgyzstan, pictures of Kyrgyzstan. [Kyrgyzstan Travel Information](#)

"A human must move because the sun, moon,
star, animals, fish - everything moves

and only the land and dead creatures stay where they are", utter nomads.

A 7th century visitor to Kyrgyzstan commented on its "tall peaks that reach to the very sky" and warned travellers against being "molested by dragons". The dragons have long gone but the peaks remain - as does the sense that you are venturing into a land of mystique and adventure, of untold possibilities and remote, achingly beautiful wilderness.

It's striking that this land, crossed by centuries of Silk Road travellers, wandered by generations of nomads and the battleground of Chingiz Khan and other warring tribes, remains so little touched by man's hand. Kyrgyzstan's cities may retain a Soviet face, legacy of its 20th century past, but its soul lies in its silent mountains, vast skies and open landscapes.

Despite its small size, Kyrgyzstan boasts a wide variety of terrain: velvet alpine pastures, jagged snow-capped peaks, sweeping steppe grasslands and dry desert syrt. Lucky visitors may see the rare Marco Polo sheep and even rarer snow leopards which patrol the icy summits. But one gift is bestowed freely on all visitors - the life-enhancing joy that comes from exploring Kyrgyzstan's wild places.

The mountains of Kyrgyzstan are the cradle of its people. The landscape has shaped and preserved their nomadic lifestyle and culture for centuries. Step behind the veil of hills which line the roads to discover a world of yurts, galloping horses, grazing livestock and colourful carpets: a world that conjures up the great encampments of Chingiz Khan - here is the heart of Kyrgyzstan.

History and legend come together in the story of how the nomadic Kyrgyz tribes came to inhabit their mountain stronghold. Red-haired and blue-eyed, they are believed to have migrated from the Yenisei River in Siberia between the 9th and 12th centuries. Central Asia's steppes and mountains had been home to waves of nomadic empires for thousands of years and the new arrivals found themselves fending off constant invasions by warrior tribes.

When the fiercest of the invaders, Chingiz Khan, swept through in 1219, life changed forever. The Mongol Empire stretched across the region, razing the Silk Road oases of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva to the ground. The Kyrgyz owed their survival to their nomadic mountain lifestyle, intricately evolved over 2,500 years, and their excellent horsemanship, which gave them supremacy over sedentary peoples.

Early travellers to the region were struck by the impressive Kyrgyz camps with 50 or more yurts. These ails were led by a manap (chief) with the help of aksakals (advisors). The most senior man by birth, he not only had to be wise but also wealthy enough to fulfill his duties of hospitality. If he became too autocratic, the ail could move away to join another group.

Exquisite horsemanship was shown off at festivities during the day but eloquence and poetry were also highly prized. In the evening, around the fire, akyns (bards) would improvise verses and compete with each other in witty banter, astonishing visitors with their verbal dexterity.

The Kyrgyz settled into villages in the mid 20th century during the Soviet period but their identity is firmly rooted in their nomadic heritage and they still have a passion for their horses and akyns. The country is proud to have been the first of the former Soviet states to declare independence in 1991 - a sign of their determination to forge their own destiny.

Cities and places in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan cities. History and pictures of all interesting Kyrgyzstan cities

Arslanbob

In the Jalal-Abad region of Southern Kyrgyzstan lie the walnut groves of Arslanbob. Arslanbob is said to

be named after an 11th century hero who met his death nearby - betrayed by his wife to his enemies. His footprints, handprints and bloodstains are said to be still visible at the spot. There is another account which tells of a modest, earnest, and hardworking man charged by the prophet Muhammed with finding a beautiful and comfortable place ...

Bishkek, cannot claim to be one of the major cities of the world, like London, Paris or New York. It is, however, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan and does have a number of important and interesting buildings, monuments, parks, museums, galleries, theatres and other places worth seeing or visiting. This is not meant to be an exhaustive guide to the city but simply a brief introduction to the city and its history ...

Cholpon Ata

Chalpon Ata is the largest town (village) on the Northern shore of the lake, at its mid-point, some 250 kilometers from Bishkek. Summer always sees large numbers of travelers descend for a stay in one of the nearby health spas or resorts (Chalpon Ata boasts one of the two Presidential residences on the lake), and Soviet athletes used to arrive for training at altitude ...

Jalal-Abad

It is the administrative, economic and cultural center of Jalal-Abad oblast (province). It lies in the south of the Kugart valley, and among the foothills of the Babash Ata mountains to the North. The climate is noted for dry, hot summers, warm and sunny autumns with rare rainbursts, and warm winters with high humidity. The region is the agricultural center of...

Irkeshdam

Osh is an ancient town on the Great Silk Road, and celebrated its 3000 year anniversary recently. The architecture of the town is completely different from that of Bishkek, as there are far fewer Soviet buildings, and most houses are small handmade buildings, mainly in the Uzbek style with wooden ornamentation. The only element the city has in common with Bishkek are the tree-lined boulevards and parks....

Karakol

Karakol lies at the Eastern end of Lake Issyk Kul. The largest town and the administrative center of the Issyk Kul oblast (Province), the town was founded by Russian settlers in 1869. The name translates as "black lake" ...

Kara-Suu

The village of Kara-Suu is 600km from Bishkek on the upper reaches of the Kara-Suu River, 1300m above sea level. The village is 70km from Kerben and 210km from Jalalabat. A distinguishing feature of the area is the variety and multitude of flora and fauna. The Kara-Suu River flows from the southern part of the At-Oynok mountain range and joins the river Naryn at the town of Tash-Komur...

Kochkor village

Most people used to simply pass through Kochkor (or Kochkorka, as it used to be known in Russian), on their way to, or from, Torugart Pass and the Chinese border. These days, more people are stopping and spending a little time in the region ...

Naryn

Naryn is a town with a long, thin shape which straddles the fast flowing Naryn River and is set between high, steep cliffs. It still houses an army base and headquarters for the customs post at Torugart - and so camping on the hills overlooking the town is forbidden. Naryn is known mainly as a stopping point for travellers on the way to/from Kashgar, and unfortunately many guidebooks published in the West are not very complimentary about the town...

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Saimalu Tash (Saymaluu-Tash)

Hidden away at over 3000 meters in the Ferghana range, 100km northwest of Djalal Abad near the Kurgat Pass is the remote plateau of Sailamu-Tash. The name means "Patterned stone" and refers to the gallery of thousands of stone paintings here- petroglyphs which are littered around the landscape...

Sheker

This village, close to the Uzbek border, is famous as the birthplace of Chinghiz Aitmatov. Aimatov is a famous Kyrgyz author, probably the only native Central Asian author to obtain international renown. His works have been translated into English and other European languages. (It is actually claimed that he has been translated into more than one hundred languages, with a total circulation of 90 million copies) ...

Tash-Rabat complex

The Tash-Rabat complex is a historical and cultural area, including two of the oldest memorials: the caravanserai at Tash-Rabat and the site of the ancient settlements of Koshoi-Korgon. Caravanserai Tash-Rabat is one of few well preserved memorials from the Middle Ages. It is situated at an altitude of more than 3000m above sea level in the picturesque canyon of Kara-Kuiun, 60km from At-Bashi village and 90 km from Naryn...

Talas

Talas is a little known town in a valley of the same name. It is cut off from the rest of Kyrgyzstan by massive mountain ranges and the "easiest" route is via Kazakhstan - involving the need for a transit visa. It is, however, possible to reach the valley by following the Tuu Ashuu pass and then turning North off the main Bishkek-Osh road after skirting the Suusamir Plain ...

Uzgen

Uzgen is only one and a half hours drive from Osh (north) and one of the most important towns of the former Karakhanid Khanate. Important sights are a minaret of the same architecture as the Burana tower, and three mausoleums, which have been combined into one single building.

Kyrgyzstan culture

Kyrgyz customs and national traditions

Kyrgyz culture has been greatly influenced by their nomadic heritage. It is reflected in the way a household was run, in customs and rites. People decorated their homes with items that were both beautiful and practical. The masterpiece of folk creation is the Kyrgyz yurt (yurt, yurt, tent), which was easy to assemble and transport from place to place.

The Yurta is a small dwelling, decorated with hand-made felt carpets and strips. Having its roots in ancient Turkic tribes, the yurt took all the best from many centuries' experience of nomadic people. Kyrgyz tribes, occupied with nomadic cattle-breeding in the mountains, worked out the best type of transportable dwelling that is easily dismantled, moved on pack animals and again set up.

The Yurta consists of wooden pieces and a felt cover.

Latticed folding walls (kerege) consist of separate links. They define the size of the yurt. From the outside, the kerege are covered with mats made of cheegrass stalk. It lets air into the dwelling and at the same time protects it from wind and dust.

The spherical roof of the yurt is made of sharply bent poles - uuk. At one end, where they are bent, they are fixed to the upper part of the wall base, at the other end they are set into the holes in the tunduk - a wooden circle at the top of the yurt.

The Yurta is made of willow; for the tunduk, which constitutes the hole for smoke to leave the yurt, they use more solid kinds of wood (birch, juniper).

The Yurta is covered by felts of different types. These include tunduk jabuu, tuunduk, and uzuktor. The felt cover is connected to its frame by narrow woven and leather strips. The cover of the tunduk is moveable and the hole for smoke is easily opened in the morning and closed at night with help of long cords. The doorway is covered with felt or woven ornamented curtains.

Yurta can be set up in about 1 hour.

The internal and external sides of the yurta are richly decorated with different ornamented items made of felt, application, braided patterned fringe, multicolored tassels (chachyk) and patterned braid (terenkek boo).

Over the years, not only the yurta as a whole, but its interior has changed. The right side of the yurta was considered the women's part (epchi jak). Here, colored bags with felt application, clothing, headdresses, jewelry, needle work of mistresses and pottery were kept. Food storage was separated with a screen from the ornamented mat (chygdak).

The left side was for men (er jak), where the best clothing and headdresses of the men were hung, and closer to the entrance hung a harness.

The place opposite of entrance was considered an honorary position (tor). On this part of the wall was a row of trunks where rarely used patterned carpets were laid. The more carpets - the richer the people living in the yurta. On the floor of the yurta only the best carpets, ala-kiyiz, were laid, and on them - narrow quilts (toshok) or fur rugs - koldolosh. The "Tor" was the center of the yurta. It was the place for the most honored guests. "When you are the guest, don't sit in the tor". If a person more honorary than you shows up, the master will tell you "Give your place to him!". And you will have to give up that spot before all the guests. So when you are guest, take a less honorary place. And the master of the house will come and say: "Respected friend, please, go to tor", then your authority will increase). Before sitting guests was laid a kind of table-cloth - a "dostarkhan". In the middle of the yurta they made the fire and cooked the meals. This spot is called "kolomto". Rich people cooked their dishes in special yurtas - "oshkanas". Poor people lived in small, smoky yurtas (boz ui, kara ui), where they kept not only their utilities (bed, pottery), but during the coldest time of the year - newborn calves and lambs.

In the yurta, people are always surrounded by comfortable carpets, woven and embroidered covers, blankets and pillows and other items often made by the mistress herself. Materials that she uses include felt, fleecy cloth, furs, textiles, and cheegrass; the main decorations are bright colors and ornamentation.

The coloring of Kyrgyz national cloth, carpets, and embroideries is saturated and cheerful. It is composed of strong, contrasting colors, where warm colors (red and light brown) prevail. In the past, masters used natural dyes. Ornamentation has its origin in the Bronze age, but gradually has been improved and expanded. Its elements were taken from the flora and fauna which surrounded the nomadic peoples. The main motif of Kyrgyz ornamentation was "kochkor" - stylized ram's horns. Sinuous lines with rhythmically placed curls are named "kyal" (dream or fantasy). It is also reminiscent of the branches of a flourishing tree.

Kyrgyz carpets - "kiyiz" and "shyrdak" - are made of warm felt and are always richly decorated. Shyrdak is made with the help of a mosaic technique of application, based on a patchwork of felt pieces with multicolored threads. Ala-kiyiz is made by ramming and rolling multi-colored fur into a friable felt base. It is famous for its cleanness of line and its fuzziness.

Mats and screens, as a rule, are a whole art composition, made by braiding cheegrass stalks with multicolored fur. On homemade machines, women wove from thick threads the braid (boo) for various ornaments. They embroidered with fur and gold thread on leather, felt, chamois and canvas.

Feasts and Holidays

Nooruz (New Year)

Nooruz is the Muslim New Year's, and the most widely celebrated holiday in Kyrgyzstan. It has been

celebrated on March 21st for more than 2,000 years. A lot of preparation goes into this special day. People buy or make new clothes, and boz ui are erected and decorated with juniper to make them as attractive as possible.

In Bishkek, the colossal festivities culminate in a game of ulak tartysh (see below), and in every city and village in the land, smaller but no less lively celebrations take place. It is a great honor to take part in Nooruz, which is held in Muslim countries all over the world.

Uilonuu toi (Wedding Feast)

Before they get married, the young couple's parents prepare clothes for them. The bride's mother, sisters-in-law and friends put up a white yurt. The groom and his friends come to take the bride away.

According to tradition, the bride's mother and sister-in-law sing koshok (a lament over her departure) and say good-bye to each other. Her sisters-in-law accompany the bride to the groom's house, where the wedding party starts.

Beshik toi (Cradle Feast)

This feast celebrates a new child's first day in the cradle, within a week of his or her birth. The beshik is a wooden cradle used to swaddle a child until he or she starts walking. Historically, the Kyrgyz made very simple beshiks, suitable to their nomadic way of life. Two arcs are made from a bunch of dry willow as thick as a forearm; holes are made in their bases. Sticks matching these holes are attached, and wicker rope is strung between the sticks. A mattress is spread out inside.

Jentek toi (Birth Feast)

New parents show their happiness by treating their neighbors, and a mark of respect is to treat people to sary mai (yellow butter). First it is put into the baby's mouth, followed by the oldest person in the house. The sary mai is kept in a slaughtered lamb's, sheep's or calf's stomach for the purpose of this feast. To honor the baby, guests bring clothes, animals or food. Relatives offer calves, sheep or lambs. They can also present a shyrdak (carpet) or horsecloth.

Kyrgyz stringed instruments

Comuz - crafted from a single piece of wood, with three strings that are played by plucking. The modern comuz is about 85-90 cm long with strings made of kapron. A special feature of the comuz is the ability to tune the strings in variety of ways to suit the music being played. To play the comuz, the performer holds it in a horizontal position while seated or - more rarely - standing. Numerous playing techniques are possible and mastery of the right (plucking) hand technique especially allows for playing of a variety of difficult and complex compositions. The comuz is a standard member of any Kyrgyz folk music group. According to legend, the first comuz was made by the hunter, Kambar. He himself was a master performer (komuzchi), and Kambarkan became one of the distinctive creative genres of Kyrgyz folk music.

Kyyak (kyl kyyak) - a string and bow instrument 60-70 cm in length. The traditional kyyak is made from the wood of an apricot tree and has two strings of untwisted horse hair. Horse hair is also used for bow. The kyyak is played by a master performer (kyyakchi) in a seated position with the instrument held vertically, while the stretched hair on the bow is drawn gently across the strings. The fingers of the left hand do not press the strings to the fingerboard; they gently touch it, producing colorful, harmonic tones similar to certain techniques used in violin playing. Given two options for tuning, the upper string is melodious while the lower string is resonant. The traditional kyyak is an instrument transposing one octave down. The majority of the traditional compositions for the kyyak are very lyrical and heartfelt, which is completely in accordance with the musical nature of the instrument.

National cuisine

Kyrgyzstan hosts over 80 distinct cultures and nationalities. Unsurprisingly, its diverse multiethnic environment has influenced a variety of national cuisines and beverages particularly from Kyrgyz, Russian, Dungan, Uzbek, and Korean traditions.

Kyrgyz food is heavy on meat, dairy, and bread, and light on spices. This is less true of Dungan and Uighur dishes. Each meal ends with the "omin," a face-washing-like motion, which gives thanks to God.

Besh barmak

For Kyrgyz people, besh barmak isn't just an ordinary meal - it is a ceremony complete with its own traditions and customs. A whole sheep is cut up and boiled in a kazan (iron pot) until the soup from this pot is ready to be drunk and the bones with meat on them are ready to be distributed. The dish (boiled pieces of meat with home-made noodles) is eaten with the fingers (besh barmak means "five fingers" in Kyrgyz). After besh barmak, the best dish to serve the honored guest is plov.

Plov is generally served as an enormous mound of rice with onions and carrots, and pieces of boiled meat on top. Among other main dishes there are also manty (fist-sized steamed dumplings filled with mutton and onions), lagman (a Dungan dish of thick home-made noodles in a relatively spicy sauce, with cabbage, onions, and tomatoes), chuchpara or pelmeni (smaller dumplings filled with onions, mutton and fat, and served in a soup), kuurdak (slices of fried mutton beef, with onions and spices, served on a plate garnished with herbs), shorpo (soup with potatoes, vegetables, and a big hunk of mutton on the bone).

The guests are also offered the different snacks as kuiruk-boor (a slice of sheep's tail fat and a slice of that sheep's liver, served together with spices or shashlyk - smoked kebabs of mutton (or beef, chicken, liver, or various fishes), served with onions in vinegar.

Among a variety of drinks one should be mentioned separately. **Kymyz** is the most popular drink on the jailoo, made from fermented mare's milk. **Bozo** is a thick fermented millet drink, slightly carbonated and drunk mostly in the winter. **Jarma** is a drink of fermented barley, and drunk mostly in summer.

Manas Epic

Legends of Kyrgyzstan

The Manas Epic is Kyrgyzstan's most important cultural treasure and one of the world's greatest oral poems. With half a million lines of verse, it is 20 times longer than Homer's Odyssey and The Iliad combined. To the Kyrgyz, who regard it as their sacred ancient history, it goes to the heart of their spiritual identity and is a symbol of their nationalism and culture.

Dating back 1,000 years, it has been passed down through manaschi, story-tellers called to their profession in a dream. The epic, a collection of myths, folklore and legends about the warrior-hero Manas and his successors, reflects Kyrgyzstan's nomadic past, beset by enemies and constant battles. Its theme of the struggle for freedom still resonates powerfully with the Kyrgyz today.

The three-part epic begins with Manas, a leader of enormous bravery and power who unites the Kyrgyz people against foreign enemies, ushering in an era of justice, fraternity and unity. After he is mortally wounded in battle, the second part follows the adventures of his wife, the wise Kanykei, and son Semetei, while the third part tells of his courageous grandson Seitek.

The mountainous region of Talas, in the west of Kyrgyzstan, is believed to be his homeland and is the site of his mausoleum, considered a holy place, and the Manas Ordo complex and museum, which was built for the 1,000th anniversary celebrations in 1995 and draws thousands of visitors each year.

Legends of Issyk-Kul

The Kyrgyz retell many legends about how the lake was formed, about ancient cities and the catastrophe that drowned them, when water poured out of the mountains and flooded the valley.

One legend claims that Alexander the Great flooded the valley to comply with the desire of a Persian hero, Rustem, who reigned in Andijan and possessed the lands around Issyk-Kul. Before his

death Rustem wished that the bones and relics of his companions-in-arms and ancestors should be inaccessible forever. After the conquest of the lands around Lake Issyk-Kul, Alexander decided to execute the last will of the hero. From a girl who had fallen in love with him, he learned of a well that could flood the whole valley. His beloved gave Alexander a casket with a key to the door that covered the entrance to the well. Opening the door, the well bubbled over with flood waters which submerged the surroundings. There is also a legend stating that it was Tamerlane in the 15th century who decided to destroy the rebellious cities around the lake.

According to another of the legends, in the city was a spring from which water flowed out with such a force that each person coming for water, after filling a bucket, hurried to cork up the well's throat with a heavy stone. It happened that a young man met a young woman at the spring and they tarried too long with love chatter. Forgetting to replace the stone on the fountain, the rushing water flooded not only the city but the whole valley as well.

Kyrgyz legend about tragic love and Issyk-Kul Lake

Once upon a time, so long ago that people have forgotten when, there was a city by Lake Issyk-Kul. A fortress of a powerful khan dominated the city. The terrible governor learned that one poor nomad had a daughter of incomparable beauty. The khan sent his jigits to bring the girl to him. However, the girl had a beloved young man, who, before leaving for distant lands, put his ring on the beloved's finger and asked her not to remove it until he came back. "It will protect you from any misfortune!" the young man said. The khan's envoys brought generous gifts to the girl's parents, but she rejected the gifts stating: "I love another and cannot become a wife of the khan!" When the khan's jigits grew more insistent, the girl escaped to the mountains in an attempt to hide herself from them. All of a sudden, with horror she found out that the ring on her finger had disappeared. The girl came back to the village in the hope of recovering the lost ring, but the servants of the khan seized her and took her to his camp. The khan imprisoned the intractable girl in the fortress and tried various means of persuasion to woo her for himself. His efforts were all in vain. "I love another and I shall never be yours!" This was the beauty's answer. Having failed to enjoy the girl's favor by gifts, the khan decided to possess her by force. Like a beast, he charged towards the girl intending to overpower her. But she rushed to the open window and threw herself out. Suddenly the unassailable walls shook, the earth split and water gushed out of a crevice washing away the fortress and the whole city, continuing to pour out until the whole valley disappeared under the lake.

Bishkek city

Cities and places in Kyrgyzstan

The capital, Bishkek, is situated in the Chui valley in the north of the country, between the Talas valley in the west and the eastern Issyk-Kul region. It was founded in 1878 and originally was called Pishpek, which is the name of the wooden paddle with which the Kyrgyz make their kymyz (kumiss - fermented mare's milk), the national drink. Later, during the Soviet Union period, it was named Frunze after the famous Russian General Mikhail Frunze. At the time of Independence in 1991, it was renamed Bishkek.

The city has been influenced by the Russians from the beginning, and actually more or less built by them. Most of the buildings you see today are built in a typically Soviet architectural style, and the trees in the parks, boulevards and alleys are watered by a system of canals built by Russians. Those boulevards and parks make this a pleasant city to live in, as they provide total shade in summer, when temperatures may reach 40 degrees Celsius (105 F), and the open canal system also helps to keep the summer bearable. Bishkek is known to be one of the greenest cities in Central Asia as a result of this planning.

Bishkek cannot claim to be one of the major cities of the world, like London, Paris or New York. It is, however, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan and does have a number of important and interesting buildings,

monuments, parks, museums, galleries, theatres and other places worth seeing or visiting. This is not meant to be an exhaustive guide to the city but simply a brief introduction to the city and its history.

Situated in the central Chui valley, on an inclined plain rising from 700 to 900 meters above sea level at the foot of the Kyrgyz range of the Ala-Too mountains, which rise to a height of 4,894m, covered with juniper, pine, blue spruce, birch, poplar, elm and willow. Tulips, irises and poppies grow on the foothills, producing colorful hues in Spring. Cannabis indica grows wild in various parts. Wildlife includes deer, wild boar, ibex, snow leopard, wolves, pheasants, hawks and eagles. To the North are the Jalanash hills in Kazakhstan. The mountains protect the city from extreme heat in summer and cold in winter. The Tien Shan mountains dominate the skyline to the South. Locals often describe directions as vverh (up) or vniz - (down).

The city lies at a latitude 42°50" north - similar to that of Istanbul, Madrid and New York - and a longitude of 74°35" east - similar to that of New Delhi. The area covered by the city is about 124 square kilometres, but you can walk around the city center where most of the important sights are very closely located. With a population of about 700,000 it forms the most densely populated part of this mountainous country - major nationalities include: Kyrgyz, Russians, Dungan Chinese, Tatars, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Uzbeks, and Germans, though the demographics are changing rapidly due to emigration.

Like Kyrgyzstan generally, the climate is Continental - which means hot summers and cold winters. The average annual temperature is -1°C. The atmosphere is generally dry with rainfall occurring mostly in Spring. There is an average of 322 days of sunshine per year. There are two rivers flowing through the city - The Alamedin and Ala-Archa - both tributaries of the River Chu. Also, the Grand Chu Canal flows through the city. The city is said to be the greenest in Central Asia with more trees per head of population than any other.

It is a manufacturing center, as its factories produce about half of Kyrgyzstan's output, and specialise in textiles, footwear, and heavy engineering (a particular legacy of WWII, when a number of factories were transferred from European Russia to escape the approaching German Armies - The most famous being the "Lenin" works on Prospect Mira.)

A brief history. Legends of Bishkek

Late Stone age implements have been found in the Alamedin valley. Bronze age artifacts have been found within the city boundaries and there is archaeological evidence of early settlement in the area was by: the Saks (also known as Scythians) - an iron age nomadic people herding livestock; the Usans - who combined nomadic herding with settled agriculture; the Turks - arriving from Siberia, they beat the Huns in a battle at Talas and established a Khanate; the Sogd - based in Samarkand and Bukhara, the Sogdians were Indo-European traders and farmers whose cities became centers on the **Great Silk Road**; the Samanids - a sedentary Muslim people; the Karakhanids ("Black Khans") who established a capital at Balasagan (Burana - near Tokmok); and the Mongols and Tatars, under Genghis Khan and the Kyrgyz themselves - first mentioned in Chinese chronicles from the 2nd century BC, they arrived from the upper Yenisei River Valley (Russia) in the 10th century, and became firmly established in the region by the 15th century.

There have been four major settlements on the site that is now occupied by Bishkek: Jul - 6th-12th century; Pishpek - 1825-1926; Frunze - 1926-1991; Bishkek - 1991 to the present Jul was a Sogdian city on the Great Silk Road in the 6th-12th centuries. Although archaeological excavations have recovered a few artifacts, all traces of this city have now disappeared. A walled quadrangle, It occupied an area between the modern streets of Orozbekova, Leningradskaya and Kirova. A varied population included Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Nestorian and Manichean Christians. The Mongols and Tatars under Genghis Khan later completely destroyed it.

Pishpek was one of 35 fortresses built in the region by the Khokand Khanate to extend control over the Chu valley. Built in 1825, it occupied approximately 250 sq. m. It had high clay walls and two concentric perimeters and contained living quarters, a guardhouse, armory, workshops, mosque and treasury. About

150 soldiers were garrisoned here, and hostages of the local population also lived here as a "peace pledge". A settlement grew up around the fortress, populated mainly by Sarts (Uzbeks). Conquered by a detachment of 600 Russians from Vernii (present day Almaty, Kazakhstan) in 1860 in a 7-day assault, it was abandoned, although a stronger fortress was later built by Kokand. In 1862, local Kyrgyz and Kazakh chiefs appealed for Russian aid in overthrowing Kokand domination and succeeded in destroying Pishpek once again.

According to local legend the commandant of the fortress was invited to a feast, whereafter he and his detachment were killed on their return journey. A siege began and with the help of 1,400 Russian troops from Vernii, the fortress finally fell after 10 days of savage combat. In 1864 the site became an important Cossack base and a regular relay point for the Imperial mail service. Increasing numbers of Russian settlers began to arrive, mostly freed serfs, who enjoyed tax breaks, cash incentives and free wood to help build new homes. At this time, the Russians administered the region from their base at Tokmok, but a flood in Tokmok in 1877 led to the adoption of a plan to develop Pishpek.

Army engineers planned a rectangular grid of streets, which survives to this day and was elaborated in the Soviet period. The city occupied the area between the modern streets of Jibek Joly, Togolok-Moldo, Engels and the Alamedin River - an area of about 5 sq. km. In the first official census in 1882, there were 2,135 inhabitants, mostly Sarts, Tatars, Dungans, Russians and Ukrainians - there were only 6 Kyrgyz.

The Dungans were probably refugees from the Uprising in Xinjiang - given subsidies by the authorities and assigned a plot of land to the West of the town rubbish dump. By the end of the century there were over 752 houses, mostly simple thatched roofed brick shacks, two schools (for Europeans), one three-bed clinic, and a small industrial sector with flourmills and leather works. The city elected its first mayor in 1895 - Ilya Terentev. By 1914 the city was home to some 20,000 inhabitants. There was a cinema, a newspaper, two orthodox churches, several mosques, a Russian high school for boys, a horticultural school as well as several other schools for the local population, a brewery, a distillery, flour mills and other small plants, and at least one automobile. (The brewery made 10 times more money than the other 18 enterprises combined). There were over 500 shops, a weekly market and an annual fair. A new hospital with 14 beds had replaced the old clinic, and the ambulance was a sledge pulled by a camel. In the Kyrgyz uprising of 1916 - Pishpek was left untouched although neighboring villages were raided.

After a New Year's party on 1st January 1918, a group of Bolsheviks armed themselves and "arrested" the garrison command, releasing the prisoners held in the local jail. Over the next few months, they established control over the region, but in December they faced a counter-revolution. In the village of Belovodsk, about 30km west of Bishkek, the post office was seized by a curious group of anti-Bolsheviks who managed to take control of large parts of both Pishkek and Djambul regions. Within a week they were marching on Pishkek itself.

The battle for the city lasted 8 days, but the defenders (commanded by Logvinenko - who hurried here with reinforcements from Almaty) - managed to overcome the attackers and the counter-revolution was defeated. The soldiers who died in the fight defending the revolution were buried and a memorial erected in Oak Park, near where the Russian Theatre now stands. Logvinenko became a hero and had a street named after him. (When he died in 1930 he joined the "Martyrs" in their communal grave). This ended the counter revolution in the North of the country, but during the civil war the Bolsheviks were threatened by the Basmachi movement, which even "liberated", for a time, the Parmir district in the South. In 1924 Pishpek became the political and administrative center of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Region.

Frunze - The city was re-named in honour of M.V. Frunze, a famous Communist leader and Soviet hero who was born in the city then called Pishpek in 1885, the son of a Moldovian doctor's assistant. His statue stands opposite the railway station at the top of Prospect Erkindik - and there is a museum dedicated to him on Frunze Street. In the museum a small house is preserved that, so it is claimed, is where he was born (although it is now thought that they picked the wrong one!).

After a tempestuous youth in Moscow, (and numerous arrests for revolutionary activity), he ended up commanding the Red Guards who occupied the Kremlin in October 1917. He was a major character in the Civil War, directing the defeat of the White Army in Siberia and the campaign in the Caucasus. Frunze led the Bolshevik forces that seized Khiva and Bukhara after the uprising of 1920, and pushed the Basmachi rebels out of the Ferghana valley. He replaced Trotsky as Commissar for War, introduced compulsory universal conscription and helped shape the Red Army into a formidable force. After Lenin's death he survived several mysterious car accidents, but in 1925 he was told he was ill and that he had to undergo a stomach operation - not by a doctor but by the Central Presidium! He died as a result.

Faced with the disastrous winter of 1921, Lenin issued an appeal to the workers of the world to come and help build Socialism. A group of Czech socialists answered the call and arrived by train 1925. They built themselves workshops and a small village (Rabochy Gorodok = The workers' village), which still exists. They then set about constructing schools, hospitals, the town's first bank, government housing and other major public works.

The population did not escape the repression of the Stalinist regime. A short distance outside the city is Chon Tash - the scene of mass executions, now a popular tourist resort for people from the city. 1991 saw the televised excavation of a mass grave of some of the victims of Stalinist repression. Chinghiz Aitmatov paid for the transfer. The discovery was made because, although the KGB swore the caretaker to secrecy, he told his daughter on his deathbed in the 1980s. After independence she came forward to tell the story.

During WWII, Frunze developed as a major city. Several key factories, (including the "Lenin" works on Prospect Mira) were evacuated to the city away from the approaching German armies. Whole populations of Russians, Germans, Koreans, Caucasian peoples and others were forcibly repatriated here. Kyrgyz soldiers fought in the Red Army and number some 7 "Heroes of the Soviet Union" among their ranks. Busts of these heroes can be found on Molodiya Gvardia (Avenue of the Young Guards).

Following the war there was a planned expansion of the city with the development of micro regions (suburbs) with numerous apartment blocks being built, and many public buildings. During the 1970's and 1980's there was again a massive building program and many of the impressive, white marble faced government and public buildings were erected. In 1967, Bishkek saw one of the rare popular "uprisings" of the Soviet period. The central market at that time was on the site now occupied by Victory Park. A group of policemen on patrol stopped and beat unconscious a drunken soldier. Shoppers, believing the man to be dead, turned upon the police, encircling them - and a riot ensued. The city's main police headquarters were actually stormed and ransacked, and others were attacked. Patrolmen were dragged from their cars. A mass demonstration led to a march on the KGB headquarters, which was broken up by troops.

The city again saw troops moved onto the streets between the city and the airport, hours before the August 1991 coup in Moscow. No one seems certain who ordered them to march there. On that day, regular television and radio programs were replaced by broadcasts of Swan Lake, and eventually President Askar Akaev announced to the nation what had happened.

Frunze was renamed Bishkek in April, 1991. There are several versions of what the name means - but the most common version is that is from the name of an implement used by Kyrgyz women to beat milk in a churn to make kumiz (a fermented drink made from mares' milk). There is a legend that the Khan's wife forgot her bishkek and as it was very precious, being studded with jewels, the khan was very angry and sent 40 men to search for it. Unable to find it, and afraid to return - they settled down to a life in exile and called their encampment Bishkek.

Another legend refers to five knights who found the land so beautiful they fought over it. In the Kyrgyz language "Besh" means five and "kek" means "chief". A third links the name to the grave of a busy craftsman whose nickname was "Bishbek" - because he was always busy, like a Bishkek making Kumiz. Yet another links it to the Kazakh words "Bes biik" which means "five peaks". The "official" version

recorded in the "Atlas of the Kirghiz SSR" - suggests that it is a corruption of the ancient Sogdian term pishagakh - which means "place below the mountains".

The city continues to grow and develop. The skyline sees new building designs (in an "individualistic" style), which are a deliberate break with the Soviet "Slab" architectural style. New, western style, cafes and shop fronts have appeared, in summer a large number of open-air cafes appear in the parks and on streets, advertising billboards have sprung up and the volume of traffic has grown tremendously. Internet cafes now exist on nearly every street corner, as well as inexpensive "ip" long distance telephone services.

In short - Bishkek is developing into a modern, western style city.

Cholpon Ata Cities and places in Kyrgyzstan

Cholpon Ata is the largest town (village) on the Northern shore of Lake Issyk Kul, about half way along, some 250 kilometers from Bishkek. Summer has always seen large swarms of travelers descend upon the north shore for a stay in one of the nearby sanatoria or resorts (Cholpon Ata boasts one of the two Presidential residences on the lake), and Soviet athletes used to come here to train at altitude. Although there are still large numbers of summer visitors, the region has lost some of its appeal, as it has failed to keep pace with the competition. Most holiday visitors these days are wealthy residents of Almaty, Kazakhstan from across the border.

There is a small market for everyday necessities, a yacht club, (it is possible to take boat trips on the lake), a hippodrome and a major stud farm. There is also a museum displaying archaeological finds from around the region and the Chui valley, musical instruments, traditional craftwork, and exhibitions devoted to the Manas Epic, Akaev and Chinghiz Aitmatov. The town also hosts a museum dedicated to the Kazakh writer Auezov.

Just to the North of the town lies an "open air art gallery" - containing a fine display of petroglyphs which date from the sixth to the first century BC.

In the Canyon above the town are forests, the Kyzyl Beirel waterfall, and the Chon Koi canyon. As well as the sanatoria, accommodation is possible in a number of homestays.

Slightly offshore is the sunken village of Chengu - "red valley" - the capital of the ancient Usun State in the second century B. C. - and as the waters of the lake recede it is thought that the village will soon emerge from the depths. Referred to by early Russian explorers to the region, diving expeditions were undertaken in 1956. The divers found several baked bricks, fragments of ceramic dishes, a piece of ceramic pipe (which suggests a high level of local civilization), bronze arrowheads, iron knives, and the bones of both people and animals. Offshore, opposite the villages of Korumdy and Temirovka and near Grigoryevskaya harbor, archaeologists found fragments of ancient pots dating back to the Bronze Age.

Unfortunately, only a few such articles have been preserved, because the majority were taken by local residents and travelers as souvenirs. The knife handles are topped with large figures of horses or sheep. The horses look very realistic: with large heads, long tails, and well-developed leg muscles - typical of steppe horses. One of the most interesting finds from the bottom of Issyk-Kul is a sacrificial table of almost square shape. It has four legs shaped like a woman's body, 22 cm high. These figures are well preserved: slant eyes, wide nose, oval chin, and a short and strong neck; scholars believe these figures suggest how ancient residents of the Issyk-Kul region looked.

Another find was a large hemispheric sacrificial pot with two horizontal handles and a relief tamga (the seal of a master) resembling a crescent, with the points directed downwards. Such pots were widespread in this region in the 2nd half of the 1st millennium, and more than 10 such pots have been found at Issyk-Kul - but this pot was the largest. It is thought that such pots were used only on holidays and special occasions. The large size of these pots testify to the huge feasts of ancient cattle breeders in honor of their gods.

Legend of Cholpon Ata

There is a legend associated with Cholpon Ata which is often quoted by locals as their favourite of the Kyrgyz legends: Once upon a time, so long ago that the people have forgotten exactly when it happened - under a high mountain sat a city. Above the city towered the fortress of a powerful Khan. The Khan was famous for his riches, but more importantly - for his cruelty. Each day, some citizen was killed and his body thrown into the ground.

The old Khan was lecherous and he heard that one poor peasant had a daughter of inexpressible beauty. The Khan decided that he must have this beautiful girl.

The girl and her father lived in small village, in a valley in the mountains, on the banks of a river. Many young men from all around (Dzhigits) tried to win her heart, but she did not pay any attention. To offers of love and marriage, from even the most courageous Dzhigits, she always answered that she loved another.

Who was this beloved? - nobody knew, and neither did she... It came to pass - one day, when the sun peeped over the top of mountains, a Dzhigit on a white steed came and together they rode off into the sky. A whirlwind blew and took them to a mountain top covered with eternal snow. The strong Dzhigit embraced her, kissed her, then removed from his hand a ring and gave it to her. Placing it on her finger, he said: "I will soon return! Never remove this ring, and unhappiness will not touch you!"

Many days passed, but the Dzhigit did not return. When the Khan's matchmakers arrived in the girl's village with gifts and offers - she rejected them all, saying: "I love another and I shall not be another's wife!"

The girl went up into the mountains, hoping to find once more the Dzhigit. In vain she called his name, only the echo of her own voice returned to her. The girl began to cry and started to make her way back home. She had not yet reached her village, when when she was surrounded, seized, tied up and blindfolded by a gang of youths. When she was released and the blindfold removed she realized what had happened, that she was a prisoner in the Khan's fortress, from which it was impossible to escape. It is better to die, she decided, than to become the wife of the Khan.

Her beauty and youth surprised the old Khan. He showered gifts upon her. But no gifts could win her over and make her change her mind. "I love another and I shall never be yours!", was always her answer.

This "stubbornness" displeased the Khan, and he decided to take by force what he could not win with gifts. He again came to the girl, promising her love, everything, ... even freedom. "I love another!" - she repeated. The Khan rushed at her like a wild animal and she ran to a window. "I shall not be yours!", she cried and threw herself from the window onto the ground below.

From where she fell at the foot of the high and mighty walls of the fortress, caves opened up and water gushed from them. From them flowed water which was light-blue, pure, clean, crystal clear, and as hot as the maiden's heart, which formed the mountain lake which the people called Issyk Kul.

It is said that if you stand on the shore at Cholpon Ata ("Cholpon's Father") you can see in the mountains opposite the face of the girl's father, whose tears flow down the mountainside to add to the salt waters of the lake as he weeps for his beautiful daughter who threw herself from a window high in the Khan's citadel, rather than succumb to his evil advances and betray her true beloved. And, on quiet summer evenings, when the sun sets, the ruins of a fortress appear under the water and the voice of the girl can be heard.

Kochkor village

The town is actually a conjoining of two villages. One guide book calls it a "sleepy little Kyrgyz village" - although it is a little hard to imagine it as "sleepy" when you consider the number of people in the main square almost every day. Another travel writer was reminded of the paintings in Bishkek's Fine Arts Museum of traditional Kyrgyz life, enhanced by enlightened Soviet settlement policies. This

probably has something to do with things like the metal cutouts on the lampposts along the length of the main street - a hammer and sickle; a rocket blasting into space and a sculpture of an atom representing science; a cog wheel representing industry and technology; corn representing the agriculture of the region ... and so on. There are also painted wooden fences with slats of wood held together by an elongated diamond shape - typical of villages everywhere in the former Soviet Union.

Actually, the history of Kochkor does represent this in some ways. It is supposedly the site of the first settlement in the valley. There are some ancient mounds to the South - between Kara Suu and Bolshevik. Situated on the main road from Balykchi to Naryn, at a point where the road to Suusamyr (and on to Osh forks off from the main road to China from Issyk-Kul and the Chui valley) it marked a natural stopping point for a camp for nomads and travelers.

A mosque and an inn (Chayhana) were established. As such it has always attracted a wide variety of nationalities. As well as the Kyrgyz - Uzbeks, Uighers, Dungans and later Russian and German settlers were attracted to the plain. (Since independence, many of the other nationalities have, in fact, left.).

In 1909 the spot was renamed Stolypin, after the Russian Prime Minister who was a major advocate and proponent of Russian expansion into, and the settlement (colonization) of Central Asia. Stolypin and the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, were violently opposed to each other's ideas and after the 1917 revolution, the town was renamed Kochkorka - and as with many towns which have been renamed since independence - the Kyrgyz version of the name Kochkor was adopted.

The region has a mild climate and the land between the mountain ridges is ideal for agriculture. In Soviet times there were several large collective farms in the valley and Kochkor was well known for its crops - especially potatoes, which are still sought after.

As well as just "soaking up the atmosphere", (for example by walking along the main street that runs through the town; spending some time in the main square; perhaps visiting the market and visiting the cemetery with its eclectic collection of memorials - a visit to the Regional Museum could prove interesting. There are said to be over 5,000 exhibits in its nine rooms. A fine yurt is on display, along with a collection of traditional Kyrgyz crafts and exhibits on local "soviet heroes". In the club of the Sonkul sovhoz there is a mosaic by the famous artist Theodore Herten. If you have time and are interested, there are a couple of enterprises here which manufacture and sell traditional Kyrgyz crafts - and are likely to be cheaper than in Bishkek shops. (Don't be surprised if you see shirdaks hanging out over the fence - or lying in the road ... it is possible the shirdaks are for sale ... but it more likely to be a family "spring cleaning").

Because of its position on the main road from Bishkek/Issyk Kul to Naryn (and hence onto China) and from Issyk Kul to Osh and the South, Kochkor offers a fine base from which to make trips into the surrounding countryside.

Traveling from Bishkek/Issyk Kul you pass the Orto Tokoy reservoir. The water level fluctuates considerably throughout the year, but the turquoise color can be quite striking - and in winter, when it is frozen over it has a mystical, desolateness. Incidentally, the reservoir is on the same River Chu that flows down to Bishkek via Boom Gorge ... although you might get the impression that it must flow via Issyk Kul - it doesn't ... it swings around the end of the Kyrgyz Ala-Too range. From Kochkor it is possible to visit Son Kul, either by driving up towards Naryn as far as Sary Bulak and then turning off ... or by taking the Osh Road and turning off to Kara Keche before Chaek. There are several mountain pastures (Jailoo) in the region and it possible to trek, ride horses, or drive to several of them and overnight in a yurt with a shepherd's family.

As well as sheep, you will see many horses. The Kyrgyz pride themselves on their horsemanship ... it is often said that Kyrgyz boys learn to ride before they can walk. The horses are valuable animals - and provide the Kyrgyz with meat and Kymyz as well as a mode of transport. However, any animal that is going to be slaughtered for meat will never be ridden - as it affects the quality of the meat.

About 25km from Kochkor is the Chong Tus complex. Here is a mountain of rock salt, and in Soviet times a mine was established to extract the mineral. The mine still operates and salt is produced not just for use in Kyrgyzstan - but is also exported. You won't find it on your table, however, as the rock salt is usually given to farm animals as a food supplement. Also, during the Soviet period many people would come here for treatment for Asthma and allergies. Apparently, spending time in the atmosphere inside the salt mine is thought to be very beneficial. A course of treatment involves staying in the mine for 10 hours a day for 16 days. In recent years a development program has been underway to turn the mine into a health resort including accommodation and facilities. Travelers, assuming that it isn't full of patients at the time, can also use the center. They have their own jailoo, about a three hours' trek away, above the center.

There are two roads to Suusamir from Kochkor. The Southern route passes through a number of villages - the largest is Chaek. A detour off this road to Min Kush is possible. The Northern route follows a river gorge - but is virtually deserted as no one lives there. The road conditions can be very poor.

The "Shepherd's Life" project is a local initiative inspired by the Swiss development program "Helvetas". A network of nomadic families offers homestays and can organize transportation and other services (horse riding, trekking, guides, talks and demonstrations of local crafts, concerts of traditional Kyrgyz music) in the region. Homestays and farmstays are popular all over the world - and for those who are willing to spend the time getting acquainted with the host families and their way of life - it can be a most rewarding experience (as well as offering the shepherds and farmers a way to supplement their income). The program has been very successful - it has been featured in travel guides; it has its own web site; it has been extended, not only to other parts of the Naryn region - but has been copied in other parts of Kyrgyzstan as well.

Legends of Kochkor

As is often the case, there are a number of legends associated with how the village of Kochkor got its name. Perhaps the most romantic tells of a poor, well educated young man - a traveler. On one of his journeys he stopped at the camp of the local Khan. The Khan had a daughter who was very beautiful - and many of the local princes had already tried to woo her - all of them unsuccessfully. In short, the traveler met her and fell in love - asking the father to allow her to marry him. Although the Khan laughed at the poor traveler, he was not amused and decided to teach him a lesson. He decided to set the would be son-in-law an impossible task. He offered the young man a chance to breed camels for 10 years and if in that time his stock increased by a hundredfold, then he could marry the princess. The young man was so in love with the girl that he set about his task. The first winter was unusually harsh.

One day there was an eclipse of the sun and a chill fell across the face of the earth and a storm blew in. The wind was so strong that the man could not even open his eyes. Exhausted, using the last of his strength, the young man cried aloud "Kach kar, Kach kar!" (which roughly translates as "Go away snow, Go away snow!") Nature heard his cry and took pity on him - the storm abated, the wind died down and the snow stopped falling. From that day, so the legend has it - it rarely ever snows in Kochkor.

Incidentally, the young man was successful: he prospered and his herd of camels increased by the required amount and so he eventually married his princess. They had a son who became a great warrior.

Another legend tells of an old widow, who was very poor, who sent a sheep to market. She couldn't go herself - so she entrusted it to a couple of her friends. The sheep was already very skinny and looked very sickly and the friends did not look after it very well on the journey. As a result, when they arrived at the market, no one wanted to buy the animal. There was an organized "sheep-fight" and the men decided to enter the animal. Because it was thin it was able to run around a lot more than its rivals around which it literally ran rings ... until the opponent dropped from fatigue. Having done so well, it was entered for another, bout ... and another. As well as earning a lot of prize money - and from bets, it became famous and the village was named in its honor - Kochkor

Petroglyphs of Saimaluu-Tash

In Kyrgyz language "Saimaluu-Tash" means "place of patterned or embroidered stone". This place is situated in a narrow canyon on a northeastern slope of the Fergansky range, in the region of Kugart pass. Crossing this pass from the agricultural Fergana Valley, you will find yourself in the valleys of the Inner Tien Shan. In the region, at an altitude of 3,000 - 3,200m, is the largest concentration of petroglyphs in Central Asia, which have been gouged out of basaltic rock.

The geological distinctiveness of Saimaluu-Tash is found in its rocky basalt outcroppings. The basalt is of a thick and strong type which breaks off in large blocks with smooth curved surfaces. The sun-baked crust on the surface of the stones creates a metallic, mirror-like shine.

Petroglyphs are painting on rock, which have survived on stones and rocks at many sites throughout the globe. Unique monuments of our ancestors which have come from the ages, they signal the beginning of the history of fine art. In spite of the fact that people have been studying petroglyphs for 200 years, some of them still remain a mystery to us. Saimaluu-Tash is the largest gallery of petroglyphs in Central Asia and consists of about 90 thousand individual specimens.

Even the greatest connoisseurs of ancient fine arts are delighted by this grand sanctuary of ancient nomadic tribes. There are both single petroglyphs and multi-image compositions in great numbers. Saimaluu-Tash, first of all, is unique in the richness of its style, and many different ages of paintings, the oldest of which are from the Bronze Age (1st century B.C. to 8th century A.D.) Within the multiplicity of Saimaluu-Tash, scholars have identified a number of essentially distinct styles, the most ancient of these being the subtle geometric representations of animals in linked triangles or rectangles - analogous to Middle Eastern ceramics from the third to first millennium B.C. It is an exhibition locked in time. These petroglyphs are geometric signposts in skeletal technique, with simple lines, static symbols and lonely figures.

Such a wide range of ages shows the best correlation with the richness of its subjects, characters and symbols. The animal world is widely represented at the site, there are elephants, lions, snow-leopards, wolves, ibex, red deer, birds and reptiles. Domestic animals are shown: horses, bulls and yaks. Multi-image compositions depict scenes of hunting, domestication of wild animals, migrating along mountain paths, ritual dances of masked people, sun and moon shaped men driving on harnessed chariots and carriages, dances of demons, resembling human creatures with canine heads and hypertrophied huge arms. Authors with high academic credentials regard Saimaluu-Tash as monument of culture of universal importance.

The Great Silk Road Kyrgyzstan on the Great Silk Road

The Great Silk road as a trading route appeared in the third century B.C. and existed until the 16th century. The ancient trading cities located along the Silk Road saw many devastating wars, invasions, fires, famines and diseases.

Most of those ancient cities have sunk into oblivion, having left ruins covered with legends to their descendants, others more than once burned to the ground, vanished and again revived to amaze the world with riches, massive domes, openwork terracotta, mausoleums and mosques.

From century to century, eastern markets with a multitude of languages bustled with activity, and for hundreds of years they carried precious silks and stones, spices and dyes, gold and silver, and exotic southern birds and animals for sale to Europeans on dusty caravan roads.

The Great Silk Road was one of the most significant achievements in the history of World civilization. An established networks of caravan roads crossed Europe and Asia from the Mediterranean to China and served as the most important means of trade and dialogue between cultures of the West and the East from distant ancient times up to the Middle Ages. The most extensive site of the Silk Road passed through the territories of Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan. Caravans laden with silk from China, spices and semi-precious stones from India, silver products from Iran, Byzantine cloth, Afrosyab ceramics and many other goods passed through the deserts of Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum, through the oases of Merv and Khoresm,

and the boundless steppes of the Sary Archa had to overcome the passes of the Pamir, Tien-Shan, and Altai Mountains, and cross the Murghab, Amu Darya and Syr-Darya rivers.

On the caravan routes rich cities, trade settlements and caravanserais began to arise and blossom. Turkmenistan - Merv; Uzbekistan - Bukhara, Samarkand, Urgench, Khiva. Kazakhstan - Otrar, Turkestan, Taraz, and Ispejab. Kyrgyzstan - Jul, Suyab, Nookent, Balasagun, Barskoon, Tash-Rabat, Osh, and Uzgen. European nations cooperated and communicated with the countries of Asia.

The Great Silk Road glows in the imagination as the world's richest exchange of trade and culture. Caravans of camels, men and horses bore lazurite, silver and spices across thousands of miles, but the unseen interaction of ideas and religions was perhaps its greatest glory, enlightening civilisations from Beijing to Rome. Then as now, Kyrgyzstan stood at a crossroads, China's gateway to the west.

This great moving bazaar was a complex labyrinth of trails over some of the world's most perilous deserts and mountains. Caravans a hundred strong survived the treacherous Taklamakan Desert in present day China and the onslaughts of bandits and slave raiders, only to risk the steep climb over the icy Torugart and Kok Art Passes into Kyrgyzstan.

Here, the Tash Rabat caravanserai bears solitary witness to these extraordinary feats of blood, sweat and bravery. The current structure dates to the 15th century although the site is said to have been occupied since the 10th. Extraordinarily atmospheric, the valley now welcomes a new wave of visitors - travelers but still echoes to the ghostly footsteps of Silk Road traders.

Osh, Kyrgyzstan's oldest city was always a crossroads trading centre. Heralded as a charmed and cultured place, rich in fruit and nut forests, it flourished during the heyday of the Silk Road. Its courts, palaces and academies were razed in the 13th century by Jenghis Khan, but the pulse of 3,000 years of trade can still be felt in its vibrant bazaars.

Tangible evidence of Central Asia's medieval glory stands at Ozgon; known as Yu in Silk Road times, Ozgon reached its pinnacle as Mavarannahr, capital of the Karakhanid Dynasty which brought Islam to the Kyrgyz in the 10th century. Here, three mausoleums and a minaret, all exquisitely carved in terracotta, are the lone relics of this sophisticated ancient epoch.

Rivers and lakes of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan the of water. History and pictures of Kyrgyzstan nature

"Water is the priceless treasure that human-being can ever have.

as by W. H. Auden saying: Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.

Water is a defining feature of Kyrgyzstan. In winter it freezes on glaciers and buries the land deep in snow. In summer it melts into cascading streams, tumbling waterfalls and ferocious torrents which carve their way through jagged cliffs and rocky gorges. This annual snow-melt is vitally important to the landlocked Kyrgyz, supplying water for drinking, agriculture and hydroelectricity.

Each August the ice-locked Merzbacher Lake on the Northern Inylchek Glacier bursts through its ice wall, sending a dramatic plume of water into the air. The run-off from this and 6,500 other glaciers feeds the trickling streams, which meander through lush mountain pastures before converging noisily in mighty rivers such as the 720 km long Naryn and the Chui. Their furious white water attracts rafters and kayakers from around the world.

Pristine mountain lakes such as lovely Song Kul provide a summer refuge for shepherds and their herds, and pilgrims flock to holy springs in search of cures for ailments and troubles. But if the lush mountains are tuned to the constant rush of water, the parched lowlands burn hot and dry, and in the south, fields of sunflowers turn their faces to the sun.

Issykul

Lake Issyk-Kul, which means "hot lake" in the Turkic languages of Central Asia, holds the title as one of the largest alpine lakes in the world. At an altitude of 1,609 meters above sea level, it is exceeded only by Lake Titicaca in Bolivia as the highest of large mountain lakes. Two mountain chains of the Central Tien Shan range border the lake - in the north the Kungei-Alatau (in Turkic: "facing the sun"), and in the south the Terskei-Alatau...

Chatkal River

Located in the Western Tian Shan mountain range, the River Chatkal flows for 189 kilometers through a remote valley in the extreme west of the country. It is flanked by the 120km long mountain range of the same name and the Chandalash range. Walnut groves, alternating with Semyonov's maple, ash and hawthorns, are spread along the lower slopes of the Chatkal River, which flows into Uzbekistan. ...

Enchilek Mountain River

Located in the Western Tian Shan mountain range, the River Chatkal flows for 189 kilometers through a remote valley in the extreme west of the country. It is flanked by the 120km long mountain range of the same name and the Chandalash range. Walnut groves with Semyonov's maple and less frequently ash and tree-like hawthorns are spread along the lower slopes of the Chatkal River, which flows into Uzbekistan.

...

Son-Kul Lake

Located in the Western Tian Shan mountain range, the River Chatkal flows for 189 kilometers in a remote valley in the extreme West of the country. It is flanked by the 120 km long mountain range of the same name and the Chandalash range. Walnut groves with Semyonov's maple and less frequently ash and tree-like hawthorns are spread along the lower slopes of the Chatkal River, which flows to Uzbekistan. ...

Kyrgyzstan mountains

Kyrgyzstan mountain ranges and passes. Kyrgyzstan recreation

“Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent schoolmasters, and teach some of us more than what we could learn from books.” – John Lubbock

From their majestic ice citadels to their sweeping verdant valleys, the mountains are the very soul of Kyrgyzstan. Fearless mountaineers pit their skills against peaks of over 7,000 metres while, far below, day-trippers stroll in flower-strewn alpine valleys. Crystal clear lakes reflect the ever-changing sky and families set up summer yurt camps on the jailoo, high mountain pastures.

The arms of two great mountain ranges embrace over 90 per cent of the country: the Tien Shan ("Heavenly Mountains") stretch for 2,500 km from east to west, while the magnificent melee of snowbound peaks which make up the Tajik Pamir spills its dramatic, arid slopes into southern Kyrgyzstan. Over 30 per cent of the country is blanketed in permanent snow and ice.

Kyrgyzstan's mountains are a playground for climbers. Peak-baggers head for the three giants over 7,000 metres.

Straddling the Kazakh border in the east, Khan Tengri ("Prince of Spirits") is the favourite pin-up - rising to 7,010 metres, its perfect pyramid summit of marble and fluted ridges burns in the sunset with the colours of hot coal, earning itself the nickname Kan Too, "blood mountain".

Vast and bulky Jengish Choko'su, known by its Soviet name, Peak Pobeda, is Kyrgyzstan's highest mountain at 7,439 metres. In the Pamir, Kuh-i-Garmo (Peak Lenin) soars to 7,134 metres and is famous among mountaineers as the easiest "seven-thousander" in the world. Off-limits in Soviet times, nearby ranges boast scores of unclimbed peaks, many of which do not require technical skills or much

experience.

The mountains encompass a huge variety of beautiful landscapes: alpine valleys of heart-stopping green plummet from glistening glaciers to noisy rivers which leap over massive boulders; wide, silent valleys are home to yaks, birds of prey and rare Marco Polo sheep; and forests of ancient walnut, fragrant juniper and elegant Tian-Shan fir cloak the slopes.

You come away with a heart full of stunning panoramas but also more than that. Maybe it's the thin clear air or the long hours of sunlight, maybe the Silk Road relics and ancient petroglyphs you stumble upon, maybe the bewitching beliefs in life-enhancing rivers; but you take away a feeling of wellbeing, as though revived by the magic and mystique of the mountains.

Altyn Arashan valley

This is probably the most visited site by foreign travelers visiting Karakol and is renowned for its beauty. The Altyn Arashan ("Golden Spa") valley leads up from the Ak Suu valley, just South of the village of Teplokluenchka, to a Spartan "hot spring" complex. The road is not an easy one, very steep in places, and requires special heavy duty 4WD vehicles ...

Batken

Batken is situated in the extreme southwest of the Republic, and consists of four mountainous regions, with altitudes ranging from 400 to 5,621 m.

The oblast (province) was created in 1999 after incursions by armed militants of the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan seeking to cross Kyrgyz territory between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan ...

Jety Orguz - "Seven Bulls"

About 25km southwest of Karakol is a lush valley with some striking red sandstone rock formations (the "Seven Bulls" from which the valley takes its name). There is a legend on the rocks' formation. A Kyrgyz Khan stole the wife of another, who sought advice from a "wise man" about how he could take his revenge ...

Barskoon valley

The road from Barskoon, which passes up the Barskoon valley, (the A364) used to be one of the routes of the Great Silk Road, passing over the Bedel Pass (4284 m) into China. It is now the main road leading to the Kumtor Gold mine ...

Konorchak Canyons

125 km from Bishkek, these canyons stretch for nearly 200km to the Eastern Kyrgyz Range. The canyons have romantic names such as "Grand Canyon", "Bobsleigh" and "Skyscraper". To see the Konorchak Canyons entirely would take years - but it is possible to see spectacular scenery with a few days' exploration...

Semyonovka valley

There are a number of beautiful valleys in the Kungey Ala-Too Mountains (The "Sunny" Ala-Too Mountains) on the Northern side of Lake Issyk Kul. The largest and best known of these are Grigorievka and Semyonovka - some 30 kilometers from Chalpon Ata when traveling from Bishkek. The area is criss-crossed by trekking routes - some of which pass over the mountains towards the city of... Almaty in Kazakhstan...

Svetly Promontory

An interesting site for a short side trip might be a visit to the little hamlet of Svetly Mys, tucked away near the shores of Lake Issyk Kul, just South of the village of Belovodsk - about 50 km from Karakol. This is reputedly the burial place of the Apostle, Saint Matthew. Having been a tax collector, he was called to be a disciple of Jesus ...

Suusamyр valley

The Suusamyр valley is a high steppe plateau - 2,200 meters, which although only some 160 kilometers from Bishkek, is also one of the most remote and rarely visited regions of Kyrgyzstan. Although it is on the other side of the massive Kyrgyz Range from Bishkek and the Chui valley, it is part of the Chui administrative region ...

Theatres and Music

Bishkek theatres

Performances often start at 5:00pm, but in the height: of the season there may be only one or two performances a week. Excluding special shows, tickets are available at the door.

The Opera and Ballet Theatre named after Abdylas Maldybaev

167, Abayrabnanova St.;

Tel.: 661548;

Tickets 50-300 soms

The theatre has resident opera and ballet companies with occasional guest companies. Season is: usually autumn to spring but there are often performances other times of the year as well.

Kyrgyz State Philharmonic

253, Chui Prospect-Tel.: 212262, 212235;

hours: 17:00-19:00 in summer;

Tickets: 70-100 soms or 3000 soms for special performances

There are two concert halls featuring classical, traditional Kyrgyz, and pop concerts and a variety of shows.

The Philharmoniya was built in 1980 and is the setting for classical, modern symphony and Kyrgyz orchestral and traditional muzical performances. The gigantic statue in front depicts the 1000-year-old hero Manas astride his magic steed Ak-Kula, slaying a dragon.

Kyrgyz Drama Theatre

273, Panfilov St., behind the Government House;

Tel.: 665802, 216958;

hours: 8:00-20:00 in summer;

Tickets 20-200 soms

The resident company performs a range; of local and international plays - performances are in Kyrgyz or Russian.

Russian Drama Theatre

122, Tynystanova St Oak Park;

Tel.: 662032, 621571;

hours- Mon-Su'n 10:00-18:00; Tickets 30-100

A range of local and international plays in Russian.

Bishkek City Drama Theatre

Chernyshevsky Library between Theatre of Opera and Ballet and Russian Drama Theatre

A small, intimate theatre with a company performing a range of local and international plays - performances are in Kyrgyz or Russian and often international.

Puppet Theatre

Sovietskaya-Michurina St.

Performances on Sundays at 11:00am.

The Conservatory
115, Jantosheva St.; Tel.: 479542
Concerts by students and professors.

Kyrgyzstan. Tourism in Kyrgyzstan

Brief info on tourism in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan Travel Information

Kyrgyzstan. Discover its beautiful picturesque landscapes and nature, its magnificent mountains and lakes!

Let us introduce you Kyrgyzstan - the land where dreams come true and the voice of waterfalls along with tender purling whisper of rivers will call you here again and again... Where sun tells the fables and night explodes by the falling stars that fulfill all your wishes.

We'll tell you the "fairy tale". The "fairy tale" about a magic country, which name is Kyrgyzstan. It's a beautiful mountainous country, amazing by its virgin nature, original culture and unprecedented hospitality. Kyrgyzstan is like sounds of komuz and trim yurt, laugh of children and clinking silence of glaciers. It's a country of contrasts. We could eternally sing about it, but everything sounds better if you hear it yourself...

We really can help you to learn our country, its original culture and history, to enjoy its unusual, charming nature and to get acquainted with its hospitable and friendly people. We would like to introduce you the traditional routes like treks, coach, biking or horse tours so exotic season programs: quest for the snow leopard, country of gigantic birds, falconry. For the acute sensations fanciers we offer ascents of 7, 6, 5, 4-thousand meters, heli-ski, paragliding, rafting and other.

We have worked out the tours for beginners and for the experienced travelers, for young and for elderly people, for students and for V.I.P. persons, for people with different level of income. People who like trekking will explore beautiful places: reserves and natural parks, historical and architectural monuments. They will make an acquaintance with nomadic life of Kyrgyz people, and will live in their dwellings - yurts. That's the really amazing adventure. For people who like hunting we can offer some unusual and unique tours.

Kyrgyzstan in combination with neighboring countries - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China will give you a lot of wonderful impressions. Ancient cities of Uzbekistan, steppes, deserts and history of Kazakhstan, powerful culture of China and astonishing nature - alpine lakes, snow tops and flourishing gorges of Kyrgyzstan... We will show it if you take a trip along the Great Silk Road.

It will be a great pleasure for us to help you to explore a lot of new interesting things which is beyond your expectations. Let us help you to do all the formalities. Welcome to Kyrgyzstan.

The territory of Kyrgyzstan is almost entirely mountainous, making it a perfect destination for many different kinds of trekking. Kyrgyzstan's mountains also boast many natural hot springs, and Lake Issyk-Kul, the second largest alpine lake in the world (after Lake Titicaca) offers many beautiful beaches for relaxing and swimming during the summer.

Kyrgyzstan is made up of seven different regions, Chui, where the capital, Bishkek, is located, Talas, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken. Culturally, Chui and Issyk-Kul are by far the most Russified areas of the country. Naryn and Talas contain the most traditionally Kyrgyz populations, while Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken enjoy a strong Uzbek influence on both their culture and language.

The most prominent local languages are Russian and Kyrgyz, with a smattering of Kazakh spoken in the North, while in the South it is common to hear Uzbek, or Kyrgyz-Uzbek creole. Kyrgyz-Russian creole is also extremely common in the Northern provinces especially, but in the country as a whole. Most locals, if they study a foreign language, study English. A few are familiar with German or French, but a reliable English-speaker can be found in most large towns.

Bishkek is the capital, the heart and soul of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as its political, economic, scientific and cultural center and main transportation hub. Its territory measures 160 sq km, with a population of about 1 million. Bishkek is situated in the center of the Chu valley, at the foot of snow capped Kyrgyz mountains of the Ala-Too range, 750 meters above sea level.

The city's main feature is strict street planning, in which streets only intersect at right angles to each other. Its streets are lined with trees and shrubs of 150 varieties.

As a center of international tourism in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek offers many sights for visitors. The main and favorite place to rest and walk for travelers and guests of the capital is the center of Bishkek, where a great many museums, galleries, shops, parks, public gardens, squares, restaurants and cafes are located.

Oak park is one of the favorite places for citizens to relax, where it is always cool under the dense crowns of trees, and cute and frisky squirrels scurry on the ground. Oak park is kind of open air sculptural museum. Sculptures made of stone, iron and wood are placed one by one and in groups along the park's alleys, paths and lawns.

"Bishkek open exhibition" which adjoins oak park, is the main gallery of Erkindik Boulevard, where one can admire the works of local painters and craftsmen. Behind the gallery is the main square of the country, Ala-Too Square. The Government House, made of white marble, is also located there.

The square is decorated with fountains; there is also a stage where mass concerts and dances are held. It is also the most common place for military parades, demonstrations, celebrations and festivals.

The capital's art shops offer foreign guests a variety of souvenirs and handicrafts made in such large organizations as Kyal, NGO Zengi-Baba, Altyn-Beshik and Shaarbek, which regularly organize exhibitions and fairs of souvenirs and handicrafts on the squares of the city.

Bishkek can be proud of its national, ethnographic attraction, the historical complex of national hero, Manas Aiyly and tourist complex "Kyrgyz Aiyly". Kyrgyz Aiyly is an ancient history of our capital, where national yurts are set up, reflecting the history, culture and lifestyle of the Kyrgyz people. Here, visitors can relax in yurts, become acquainted with the applied arts of nomadic people, get a feel for the national traditions, and try Kyrgyz cuisine and fresh kumis.

The **Eastern bazaar** is one of the most colorful sights of Bishkek, as in any other Central Asian city, where in any season a variety of fruits and goods from all over the world is on offer. Bishkek is a center of the national culture of Kyrgyzstan, and the place where the Republic's supreme elected bodies, foreign embassies and representations, and mosques and Orthodox cathedrals are located. There are representative offices of many large international companies in the city.

Along with its unique nature, Kyrgyzstan is of interest to foreigners for its history. More than five thousand historic and cultural monuments from ancient times have been found on the territory of the Republic. Priceless preservers of ancient culture are of great intellectual importance, including cave dwellings of primitive humans and runic writings on stones, wonderful petroglyphs and stone sculptures, ruins of antique settlers and medieval castles, which impress all with their rationality and high level of mastery. The Great Silk Route passed through the territory of contemporary Kyrgyzstan, and along the Route settlers and caravanserais appeared; their ruins can be visited today.

The biggest and the most important archeological and architectural monuments are: Suleiman-mountain, Uzgen architectural complex, tower of Burana, Shakh-Fazil mausoleum, and caravansarai Tash-Rabat. Nobody will remain unimpressed after having a look at these historic monuments. Contemporary architecture is represented by architectural ensembles in the cities. Wonderful public buildings, apartments, industrial buildings, squares and parks have been built for the people, in the name of the people. Original architectural design and use of national traditions represent the unique character of Kyrgyzstan's cities. Guests of the Republic can familiarize themselves with the unique culture of the Kyrgyz and their interesting customs and traditions, try national dishes and purchase the famous souvenirs of the amateur folk-art industry.

Travelers will enjoy sightseeing both in the south and north parts of the Republic. There are many historical monuments which are worth seeing around Lake Issyk-Kul. The city of Karakol (earlier named Przhhevalsk) is really an open air museum. A Mosque which was built without a single nail, a Russian Orthodox Church, and a Buddhist temple are the most famous sights of the city.

Bishkek has many historical monuments from the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet periods, as well as modern architectural examples.

Entertainment Tourism

Over 90% of Kyrgyzstan lies above 1,500 m with unspoiled countryside and the primordial beauty of towering mountains, which give Kyrgyzstan more than 28 thousand rivulets, sparkling streams and crystal clear brooks. There are 1,923 large and small lakes in the Republic but the largest and best known is Issyk-Kul Lake.

Cultural & Eco-Tourism

Kyrgyzstan is one of the last few unpolluted places on our planet that along with its beautiful alpine scenery has preserved its nomadic traditions, rich heritage and cultural continuity that date back many thousand of years. The ecological wealth and diversity and the cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstan are suited to understanding man's relationship with nature. Living in a mainly mountainous country, the Kyrgyz people have always moved great distances according to a way of life requiring seasonal migrations. Located on the Great Silk Road Kyrgyzstan has always been a crossroads of trade and cultural exchanges between China, Iran, India and the Arabian Sea and has become home for more than 80 nationalities and ethnic communities, including Kyrgyz, Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans, Tatars, Kazakhs, Uigurs and Tajiks. As a multinational state Kyrgyzstan has a rich variety of languages, literature, folklore, arts, crafts, customs and communities that lend colour and variety to Kyrgyz culture. The Kyrgyz Republic firmly upholds the equality of all communities; the official languages are Russian and Kyrgyz, yet Russian is the common language of all the various groups.

Business Tourism

Kyrgyzstan has number of good hotels with all necessary facilities and comfort in Bishkek (Hyatt, Golden Dragon, Ak-Keme, Silk Road Lodge and others) and the Issyk-Kul region (Raduga, Aurora and others), where conferences, presentations etc. can be organized.

Sport tours

This block of tours includes an active tourism like the high-altitude ascents to the 7 thousands summits, climbing, biking tours along the crystal clear mountain lake Issyk-Kul, motor-tours, horseback-riding through the high passes and Alpine meadows, you will ride across virgin natural landscapes of Tien-Shan high mountainous area covered with edelweiss's, primulas, high mountainous roses and tulips. Also we provide the travel opportunities for adventure tours and trekking expeditions around Kyrgyzstan.

Nature and wildlife tours

During the tours you will explore the natural variety and beauty of Kyrgyzstan. You may also make pictures of wild birds and animals and fascinating landscapes.

This route will give you the rare possibility to explore the uniquely beautiful Issyk-Kul and Naryn, together with affected severity of Central Tien-Shan, which suddenly opens with delightful lakes Issyk-Kul and Son-Kul.

Culture tours

The tours like along the Great Silk Road (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China). The Great Silk Road is the popular name given to the system of caravan trade routes that lasted for approximately centuries and linked the Eastern Western civilizations between the Ancient and middle Ages. The Great Silk Route is one of the most significant achievements in the history of the world civilization.

Issyk-Kul Is the world second largest mountain lake, the largest being Lake Titicaca in South America, and is first in terms of depth and volume of water. And it lies at 1,608 m. above sea level. Issyk-Kul is

unique in that dozens of rivers fall into it but none flows out. The wooded mountain slopes around it are populated by wolves and bears, graceful gazelles and magnificent elks. The lake's water is famous for its curative properties, and some of its springs contain mineral substances that have unique medicinal value. As a health resort Issyk-Kul ranks among such well-known health-building areas as the Crimea, the Caucasus and the Baltic region. The waters of Issyk-Kul remain unbelievably blue against the snowy peaks of the Ala-Too Mountains. Issyk-Kul remains the one of nature's wonders, the "Pearl of the Ala-Too" the Kyrgyz Mountains.

Special Interest Tourism

Caving Tourism

Kyrgyzstan is rich in caves and grottos scattered throughout the Republic, many of which are easily accessible and they attract a number of speleologists, potholers or cavers, but unlike in other parts of the world, they have not yet been developed as tourist attractions.

Ornithological Tourism

In Kyrgyzstan there are 335 species of birds, which makes it a must for ornithological tours.

Biological Tours

In Kyrgyzstan there are 4,000 species of high-altitude vegetation, 500 species of animals, 335 species of birds, 25 species of reptiles, 49 species of fish and 3 species of frogs, which makes it a real paradise for biological tours.

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions. Kyrgyzstan

Visa and Registration

1. What documents are necessary to enter Kyrgyzstan?

Citizens of many countries can enter Kyrgyzstan visa-free for at least 30 days. Visas upon arrival at Manas International Airport are available for citizens of some countries, and e-visas are available for citizens of all countries. Learn more about Kyrgyzstan's visa policy [here](#).

2. What is a border permit? How can I get one?

A Kyrgyz visa is not sufficient to travel to all regions of Kyrgyzstan, as some regions require an extra border permit. Advantour only processes border permits for light treks that we organize and accompany, as we are unable to take full responsibility for alpinism and other more extreme sports. Border permits take at least three weeks to process, so make sure to apply in advance.

3. What is a group visa?

A group visa is issued for a group of two or more non-family member applicants traveling to the same location for the same purpose.

4. What is a letter of invitation (LOI)?

A letter of invitation (LOI or visa support letter) is a written document in support of a person seeking a visa to enter a foreign country. The tour agency submits an application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which reviews the application. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reviews the application, reserving the right to deny any application without providing explanations. Approved applications are telexed directly to the embassy or consulate where you intend to obtain your visa. However, this cannot guarantee visa issuance at the embassy. Not everyone will need a LOI to apply for a Kyrgyz visa.

5. What is a consular fee?

A consular fee is money charged by the embassy or consulate to issue a visa.

6. Do I need to register while in Kyrgyzstan?

Citizens from some countries need to register within 5 days of arriving in Kyrgyzstan. A general rule is that if you do not need a visa to enter Kyrgyzstan, then you will not need to register, but please check the full list in order to avoid problems. A notable exception is Uzbekistan, where citizens can enter without a visa but must register. It is possible to register without going through a tourist agency, but it requires more than basic Russian and a lot of patience to navigate the complex bureaucracy. Failing to register may incur fines and delays in leaving the country. For more about registration requirements and the services we offer, click [here](#)

Before going to Kyrgyzstan

1. What is the best season for trips to Kyrgyzstan?

The main tourism season in Kyrgyzstan lasts from April to October. During this time, the snow in the mountains is at its lowest levels, opening up trekking trails and roads to destinations higher up in the mountains. Some places, like Son-Kul and Kel-Suu, are only accessible from June through mid-September, while Tash Rabat is accessible from May to the end of September. Places at lower elevations and with well-traveled transportation routes, such as Bishkek, Osh, and Lake Issyk-Kul, are accessible year-round. In the winter, ski resorts are open for those who love winter sports.

2. What sort of weather can I expect?

Summers in Kyrgyzstan tend to be hot, and winters cold (like any average continental climate). In the mountains, temperatures can drop below freezing even in the warmest months, so visitors should bring warm clothing if going up to higher elevations, no matter the season. Travelers should also bring a brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunblock, to protect against the sun at higher elevations. For more details about the weather, click [here](#).

3. How can I fly to Kyrgyzstan?

There are direct flights connecting Kyrgyzstan to several other countries. The main international hubs are Moscow and Istanbul, with travelers often being routed through these two destinations on their way to Kyrgyzstan. There are also direct flights from Bishkek to Delhi, Dubai, Ulaanbaatar, Urumqi, and to several destinations in Russia, including Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk. There are also flights to regional destinations, including Almaty, Astana, Dushanbe, and Tashkent, though there are no direct flights to Ashgabat. There are also domestic flights to Batken, Isfana, Jalal-Abad, and Osh. Check [here](#) for more information, including days and times of flights.

4. Are there any limits for how women should dress?

There are no strict limits or official limitations on women's clothing, but visitors should be aware of cultural norms and should be respectful. In some parts of the country, especially rural areas and in the southern half of the country, women dress more conservatively, so female visitors are advised cover their shoulders, midriff, and décolleté, and to avoid very short skirts or shorts. In Bishkek and most of northern Kyrgyzstan, anything can be worn comfortably. When entering a church or mosque, women should cover their hair with a scarf and make sure to wear a skirt that comes at least to their knees.

5. Can I cross land borders in to or out of Kyrgyzstan?

Kyrgyzstan shares land borders with Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest, and China to the southeast. Some border crossings are not open for tourists, and some are only open seasonally. There are border crossings that are regularly and reliably crossed by foreigners in to and out of all four countries bordering Kyrgyzstan. Check the full list of border crossings [here](#).

6. Should I bring any medicines to Kyrgyzstan? What can I buy there?

If you take prescription medications, you should bring enough to last you through your entire trip. Prescriptions should be kept in the original container with your name on them. Over-the-counter

medications can be easily found in Kyrgyzstan, but might not be exactly the same as found in your home country. For this reason, we encourage you to bring over-the-counter medications in their original boxes for commonly encountered ailments, such as allergies, pain, or stomach problems.

7. Is it possible to import alcoholic beverages to Kyrgyzstan?

Visitors are allowed to bring 1.5 L of liquor and 2 L of wine when entering Kyrgyzstan.

8. What should I bring on a trek?

We will provide mats for sleeping, but you should bring your own personal belongings like you would for any other trek. Sleeping bags are available to rent, but it would be better if you brought your own. You should bring hiking boots, sunscreen, sunglasses, a sun cap, warm clothing, a raincoat, and a backpack to carry everything. You are expected to carry your own personal belongings, but extra porters can be hired

When you are in Kyrgyzstan

1. Is it safe to drink tap water?

The water in Bishkek is safe to drink, but we recommend visitors boil it before drinking. Bottled water is available almost everywhere in Kyrgyzstan, and is safe to drink. On treks, the water is boiled spring water, since it is impossible to carry bottled water on long treks.

2. What restaurants and cafes can you recommend? How much is a lunch for two people?

In Bishkek, a lunch will cost around \$10 per person, but possibly more, depending on what you order and where you eat. Meals may be cheaper in other regions or in smaller towns. For Kyrgyz cuisine, we recommend Navat, Arzu, and Tyubetyka, for Chinese cuisine we recommend Beijing Duck and Chinatown, and for European cuisine we recommend Dolce Vita, Prego, and Navigator.

3. Are there vegetarian options available in Kyrgyzstan?

Many restaurants and home stays will be flexible in making meatless options or offering vegetarian options. If there aren't vegetarian meals on the menu, there are plenty of foods (like fruits, vegetables, and bread) that don't contain meat. Please notify us if you have dietary restrictions in advance so we can make sure to accommodate your requests.

4. What sorts of foods are available in Kyrgyzstan?

Traditional Kyrgyz dishes feature a lot of meat and bread, but lots of other foods are available too. The main meats are lamb, beef, and chicken. Pork is hard to find, since the population is majority Muslim. Fresh fruits and vegetables are common, especially in the summer (just make sure to wash them well before eating). There are many restaurants that feature Russian, European, or Chinese dishes, too, especially in Bishkek.

5. What happens if I have a medical emergency?

Medical care is widely available in Kyrgyzstan, and our guides and company will do all we can to assist you in a medical emergency. We will provide a translator in case doctors or medical staff do not speak English. On treks, guides will be able to help with basic first aid. Alpinism is the most difficult scenario in which to offer help, so climbers should take precautions to ensure their safety and reduce risks.

6. Can foreigners buy SIM cards for cellular service in Kyrgyzstan?

Yes, SIM cards are available from authorized dealers (but will require a passport to register) or from unauthorized dealers.

7. Which mobile phone companies operate in Kyrgyzstan?

There are three mobile phone carriers in Kyrgyzstan: Beeline, O!, and MegaCom.

8. Are credit cards accepted? Are ATMs available?

The majority of banks and hotels accept Visa and MasterCard. Many shops only accept cash, though some may take cards. Smaller cities and rural regions accept payments almost entirely in cash (Kyrgyz soms). ATMs can be found in cities in larger towns, but not in small villages. ATMs will accept most major cards, and there are no restrictions on ATM usage as in other countries (beyond a daily limit that depends on cards). Currency exchanges are also prevalent, and generally have a reasonable exchange rate.

9. Can I leave my stuff somewhere while I'm on a trek?

Yes, you can leave items either in a car or in a hotel while you are on a trek. This may require additional payment. Please check with the driver or hotel management before leaving your items somewhere.

10. What's good etiquette for going to bazaars?

Bazaars are a great way to experience Central Asian culture, but can create some problems. Make sure to be aware of pickpockets, and to keep your belongings and documents in a safe place. Bazaars can also be great to photograph, but please ask for permission before taking pictures of people.

Transportation Questions

1. Which cities are connected by railways?

Bishkek is connected to Moscow, Ekaterinburg and Novokuznetsk in Russia by railroad. The most commonly used railroad goes from Bishkek to Balykchy, on Lake Issyk-Kul.

2. Are there electronic train tickets? Can we buy train tickets in advance?

There is no electronic train ticket system available in Kyrgyzstan. Tickets may be bought at most 30 days before the trip.

3. What are the fares for public transportation and taxis in Kyrgyzstan?

Buses, trolleybuses, marshrutkas and taxis are the most common forms of transportation in Kyrgyzstan. Buses and trolleybuses are 8 som (\$0.11) and marshrutkas (vans with fixed routes) are 10 som (\$0.14) for rides within cities. Taxi fares range from 70 som to 300 som (\$1.02 to \$4.41), depending on the distance. Some taxis run on meters, and some require negotiating a fare. Metered taxis are generally cheaper, as are taxis in cities other than Bishkek. Fares for transportation between cities will range from 100 to 400 som (\$1.47 to \$5.88) or possibly even higher, depending on the distance.

General Questions

1. Why do you not offer international flights for your tours?

We believe that offering tours without flight fees gives several advantages. First, you have more flexibility in choosing your route, such as choosing which airport you want to leave from, or which route you take to get to Kyrgyzstan. Second, many people join our tours when they are already in Kyrgyzstan, thus they don't need air tickets. Buying your own tickets gives you the most freedom and comfort and allows you to find the right ticket for you. We can also buy air tickets, but only for airlines that are available in our system. Please contact us if you would like to buy tickets through our services.

3. Is it possible to buy and drink alcohol in Kyrgyzstan?

Buying and drinking alcoholic beverages is permitted.

4. What is the country code for Kyrgyzstan? What are the area codes for cities and regions?

The country code for Kyrgyzstan is +996. Check here for area and carrier codes.

5. What is the operating electrical voltage used in Kyrgyzstan?

Kyrgyzstan has 220V outlets that are standard Euro plugs (types C and F). Visitors from countries with different voltages should buy a converter, and visitors from countries with different plug shapes should buy an adapter. The capacity and circuit of your devices should be considered when buying a converter.

6. Which languages are spoken in Kyrgyzstan?

Kyrgyzstan is officially bilingual, with Kyrgyz and Russian used as official state languages. Russian is more common in Bishkek and in the government, while Kyrgyz is the most common language in rural areas and other cities. Uzbek and Tajik can be commonly found in southern Kyrgyzstan, and there are communities that speak Uyghur, Turkish, and other Turkic languages. English is becoming increasingly popular as a foreign language, and German, French, and Chinese can also be found. Guides and interpreters often speak several languages.

7. What is the national currency of Kyrgyzstan?

The national currency of Kyrgyzstan is the som. Coins in denominations of 1, 3, 5, and 10 soms, plus bills in 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000 som are in circulation. 1 som can be divided into 100 tyiyn, though tyiyn are used very rarely.

8. I like your tour, but I would like to make my own trip a bit different. Do you offer customized tours?

We offer customized tours on a regular basis. If you are interested in activities or sites mentioned on our website, please contact us, and we will be pleased to help you. We can also design a tour based on the number of days you want to travel, even if you don't know exactly which places you would like to visit.

9. What is a single supplement?

A single supplement is the surcharge added to the cost for solo travelers when they book a room alone. Our tour prices are calculated using double rooms as a starting point, therefore single rooms are charged as a single supplement.

10. What is the difference between half board and full board?

Half board includes breakfast and either lunch OR dinner. Full board includes all three meals.

11. What is the difference between double and twin rooms?

A double room is a room shared by two people with one king-sized bed. A twin room is a room shared by two people with two smaller, separate beds.

12. What is the difference between a guest house and a homestay?

A guest house is run by local residents who live on the premises. It's similar to a bed and breakfast, or an inn. Guest houses tend to be relatively inexpensive hotel-like accommodations. Homestays (family-run accommodations) are houses where local people live and receive visitors. Visitors may stay overnight and eat breakfast, and can order lunch and dinner to try home-made traditional dishes.

13. What can I expect at homestays and yurt stays?

Homestays will offer a separate bedroom for guests, which usually has beds, but occasionally may have mattresses on the floor. Blankets and towels will be offered. The toilet will be shared, and may be outside. Toilets may be western-style, or may be squat toilets, so be prepared to be flexible. Breakfast is included in the price for homestays, and additional meals can be purchased separately.

There usually aren't beds in yurts, but there are thick mattresses on the ground, plus blankets (but often no towels). Yurts are usually shared with 4-5 people, depending on the size of the yurt. Toilets are outdoors, and almost certainly not western-style. There will almost always be no hot water, and quite often no electricity (yurt camps closer to towns might have electricity, but ones in the mountains and jailoos will most certainly not have electricity). Yurts in higher elevations where it gets cold at night will have small stoves for heat, which will be lit at night and left to burn until morning.

14. What can I expect for toilets and restrooms in Kyrgyzstan?

Be prepared to be flexible with toilets. Toilets can be anything from western-style restrooms to simple outhouses, with everything in between. Some places will have squat toilets, and some places may not have running water. On the road, cafes and gas stations will have public toilets, which will cost between 5 and 10 som (\$0.07 to \$0.14).

Visa to Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan Visa Requirements

Kyrgyzstan is the most open country in Central Asia for tourists. Citizens from many countries can enter Kyrgyzstan without a visa, for periods ranging from 10 days to unlimited stays. E-visas and visas on arrival are also available for visitors.

Citizens of the following countries can stay in Kyrgyzstan for an unlimited amount of time:

Azerbaijan

Armenia

Belarus

Cuba

Georgia

Japan

Kazakhstan

Moldova

Russia

Tajikistan

Ukraine

Citizens of the following countries can stay in Kyrgyzstan for up to 90 days:

Mongolia

Turkey

Citizens of the following countries can stay in Kyrgyzstan for up to 60 days:

Andorra

Argentina

Australia

Austria

Bahrain

Belgium

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Brazil

Brunei Darussalam

Bulgaria

Canada

Chile

Croatia

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia

Finland

France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Korea
Kuwait
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Monaco
Montenegro
Oman
The Netherlands
New Zealand

Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Qatar
San Marino
Saudi Arabia
Singapore
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Switzerland
Sweden
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States of America
Uzbekistan
Vatican

Citizens of the following countries can stay in Kyrgyzstan for 30 days or less:

Malaysia (30 days)

Electronic Visas for Kyrgyzstan

Citizens of all countries, including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, can apply for an e-visa from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the www.evisa.e-gov.kg website. Processing takes 3 days, and the price will depend on the duration (from 30 to 90 days) and the number of entries. Payments can be made with VISA and MasterCard.

It is important to note that the electronic visa is valid only for arrivals and departures at Manas International Airport (Bishkek), Osh International Airport (Osh), and Ak-Jol (Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border). If you are planning to arrive or depart from any other border crossing, you need to obtain visa at the embassy.

Kyrgyzstan Visas in Embassies

If you haven't found your nationality in the list above, you will need to obtain visa at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic. In any case, you will need a Letter of Invitation (a.k.a Visa support) from Kyrgyz travel company, unless you are a holder of passport issued by the following countries.

Citizens of the following countries can obtain a visa to Kyrgyzstan without a letter of invitation (LOI):

Albania
Andorra
Argentina
Brazil
Bulgaria
Chile
Cyprus

Indonesia
Israel
Macedonia
Mexico
Montenegro
Oman
Philippines

Romania
San Marino
Serbia
South Africa
Thailand
Venezuela
Vietnam

For citizens of all other countries, visa support (including a LOI) will be necessary to receive a visa to Kyrgyzstan.

The following information is needed for Kyrgyzstan visa support:

Full name

Citizenship

Date of birth

Place of birth

Sex

Passport number

Marital status

Workplace (company name, address)

Job title

Embassy/consulate where you will be obtaining your visa (city, country)

Duration of stay: date of arrival and exit

Number of entries (single/multiple)

Cities you plan to visit

Purpose of visit

Temporary address in Kyrgyzstan

Copy of passport

Note:

- Citizens of some countries must register at local police stations (OVIR/OVD) within 5 days of arrival, including weekends and the date of arrival. Registration can be provided as a separate service. As a general rule, citizens of countries that require visas to enter Kyrgyzstan will need to register within 5 days of entering the country. Uzbekistan is a notable exception, as citizens do not need a visa but need to register.
- Citizens of 92 countries are exempt from registration for a specified period of stay. Please check here if you are exempt from registering. Failure to register will result in a 10,000 som fine, and border guards will not let you leave the country until it has been paid. This may result in missing flights and extra expenses.
- There are some regions that require additional documentation in order to visit or pass through. Most of these regions are near the border with China, in Issyk-Kul and Naryn Provinces. Since Advantour cannot be liable for alpinism or adventure sports in these regions, the only way we will issue border permits is for light treks and guided tours in these regions. Be aware that attempting to travel to these regions without a permit can be dangerous, and may result in serious trouble with the Kyrgyz government. These regions include Karkyra, Inylchek, the areas around Pobeda Peak and Khan Tengri, Kel-Suu, At-Bashi, Ak-Sai, Peak Lenin, and near Torugart.