

The jailoos are the pastures where Kyrgyz shepherds tend their flocks in the summer, and Song-Kol is the jewel of the jailoos, a stunning 270 km of sparkling water at 3016 m, surrounded by 3700 m mountains on all sides. For the fullest jailoo experience, approach the lake via the mountains enclosing the western end of Kochkor Valley, moving from jailoo to jailoo and staying with shepherd families in remote meadows far off the beaten path. Enjoy homemade jam, fresh cream, bread still warm from the oven, and the best kymyz (fermented mare's milk) around. The route traverses remote Jumgal rayon, and reaches Song-Kol via Jalgyz-Karagai (Lone Fir) Pass on the north shore.

Day 1 : Bishkek — Shamshy gorge After early breakfast leave Bishkek for Shamshy Gorge, 3-hour drive. On the way visit the Burana Tower architectural complex (the 10-11th centuries, the Great Silk Road). Meet guides' team in Shamshy gorge. Picnic lunch. Start horseback riding towards Shamshy pass (3 570 meters). Dinner. Stay overnight in tents before the pass.

Horse time: 4 hours.

Trekking time: 5 — 6 hours

Day 2 : Shamshy gorge — Sarala-Saz jailoo After breakfast continue tour and cross the Shamshy pass (3 570 meters). Descend to Sarala-Saz jailoo, which offers beautiful views of the Kara Moinok and Sandyk mountains to the south. After welcome tea in the yurt, eat dinner and stay overnight in the yurt of local shepherd.

Horse time: 6 hours.

Trekking time: 7 hours

Day 3: Sarala-Saz jailoo — Iri-Suu jailoo This day you spend crossing wide-open pastures till Iri Suu area. Eat dinner in Iri-Suu jailoo, and then take an evening walk over the hill into the beautiful Kashka-Suu River valley, where you can eat wild rhubarb and watch the alpenglow on the southern mountains. Overnight stay in yurt.

Horse time: 4 hours

Trekking time: 6 hours

Day 4 : Iri-Suu jailoo — Sook valley After breakfast at Iri-Suu, gear up for a long day through nearly-empty country. Begin by traversing the western end of the Kochkor Valley through scrubby dry terrain. After crossing the fast Karakol River, climb 1000 meters over the Buchuk Pass (3400 m). Wild onions cover the high cold ridges, while lower down whole hillsides of wildflowers bloom. Eagles soar and marmots cry and scurry about. At day's end, ford the Sook River and climb the green Kichi Saryk Valley Overnight stay in yurt or tent.

Horse time: 3-4 hours

Trekking time: 4-5 hours

Day 5 : Sook valley — Kolduu Suu jailoo After breakfast at Sook, detour to the next valley west, the Kum Bel, for the best approach to the 3 600 m Kum Bel Pass. From the pass, follow a ridge eastward and upward to the peak, 3656 m above sea level, with breathtaking 360 views and sheer drops to the north. Continue east, testing your walking skills down scree-covered hillsides, and eat lunch in a sheltered notch. Descend at last into the Kolduu Suu valley, and follow it down between dandelion-covered mountains to your yurt, in Kolduu Suu jailoo.

Horse time: 5-6 hours

Trekking time: 6 — 7 hours

Day 6 : Kolduu Suu jailoo — Kilemche jailoo After breakfast in Kolduu Suu, head south to the Kochkor — Jungal road. Follow the road a short ways east to the Kyzart Pass, then strike south again. Within sight of the road, cross Kyzyl-Kiya jailoo, an enormous, relatively flat sea of grass. Continue over the Chaar-Archa Pass (3 061 m) into the Chaar-Archa Valley and eat a tasty lunch by the racing river, with views of holy 4400 m Baba-Ata Mountain. Sated, ford the river and follow the trail over verdant hills to Kilemche Jailoo. The name means “like a carpet,” and this swathe of grass covers whole mountain ranges, with shadings as subtle as any shyrdak (shyrdak is a Kyrgyz felt carpet). Dine and sleep in a yurt, naturally.

Horse time: 4 hours

Trekking time: 6 hours

Day 7: Kilemche jailoo — Tuz-Ashuu valley After breakfast at Kilemche, spend the morning climbing to Jalgyz Karagai pass (3400 m), over the Song-Kol Mountains and into the lake’s basin. The morning climb affords wonderful views of Kilemche jailoo, and the pass itself is rocky and exciting. From the pass, Song-Kol is still distant, but as you traipse down the slopes, it gets larger and larger; the mountains on the other side get higher and higher, until finally the lake fills most of your field of view and the southern mountains tower above it. After lunch at Jaman Echki, follow the lakeshore west to the TuzAshuu yurt which is located on the shore of the Lake. Upon arrival meet your host family of Kyrgyz shepherds. Meals and overnight are in a yurt of shepherds.

Trekking time: 4 hours.

Horse riding time: 4 hours.

Day 8: Tuz-Ashuu valley — Tulpar-Tash After breakfast continue trek heading to the western part of the Song-Kol Lake, to the Jailoo Tulpar-Tash. This day walk along the Song-Kol lakeshore and enjoy different panoramic views of the lake. Arrival at Tulpar Tash and be welcomed by local shepherd’s family. Take the honorable place in the yurt and have a dinner.

Trek time is: 4 hours.

Horse riding time: 3 hours.

Day 9: Tulpar-Tash — Kochkor After breakfast at Tulpar Tash trek to Song-Kol Mountain range from the north. Cross the Uzbek pass (3 400m). On the top of the pass see the panoramic view to the whole Song-Kol valley. Descent to Jumgal valley, lunch at home stay in Kyzart village, afternoon transfer to Kochkor village. Accommodation in guest houses with hot shower and dinner. End of the first part of the tour.

Trek time is: 4 hours.

Horse riding time: 4 hours.

Part 2

Day 10: Kochkor – Kol Ukok lake After enjoying a delicious lunch at the guesthouse, we set off on an exciting journey to the breathtaking Kol Ukok Lake. Most of the route is covered by car, allowing us to take in the stunning mountain landscapes along the way. As we approach the lake, we embark on a short but scenic 15-30 minute hike, immersing ourselves in the serene beauty of the surroundings. Upon arrival, we are rewarded with the mesmerizing view of the crystal-clear lake, nestled among majestic peaks and lush meadows. The fresh mountain air and peaceful atmosphere create a truly unforgettable experience. As the sun sets, we settle into a cozy traditional yurt, where we spend the night under a sky full of stars, embracing the authentic nomadic lifestyle.

Day 11: Kol Ukok lake – Kochkor After a hearty breakfast, we set off on an adventurous trek to the stunning **Kol Tor Lake**. The journey takes approximately 2-3 hours, as we gradually ascend through picturesque mountain trails, surrounded by breathtaking alpine scenery. Along the way, we'll experience the tranquility of untouched nature, with fresh mountain air and panoramic views that make every step worthwhile. Upon reaching Kol Tor, a hidden gem nestled between towering peaks, we are greeted by the mesmerizing sight of its crystal-clear waters reflecting the sky. We take our time to soak in the beauty of this serene location, capturing unforgettable moments with our cameras and simply enjoying the peaceful atmosphere. After spending quality time at the lake, we make our way back to the yurt camp, where a delicious and well-earned lunch awaits. In the evening, we embark on our return journey to Kochkor, where a warm and welcoming guesthouse awaits us with a delightful dinner, bringing our adventure to a perfect close.

Trek time is: 3-4 hours

Day 12: Kochkor – Bokonbaevo – Barskoon – Kok Jaiyk valley The next morning, after a delicious breakfast, we embark on a scenic journey toward the breathtaking Issyk-Kul Lake. As we drive along its shimmering shoreline, we take in the vast, ever-changing landscapes that make

this region so unique. Our first stop is the enchanting Skazka Canyon, a place where nature has sculpted vibrant rock formations into surreal shapes, creating a fairy-tale-like atmosphere. We take time to explore this magical landscape, capturing its beauty and enjoying the peaceful surroundings. Continuing our adventure, we pause along the way for a delightful lunch, refueling before heading to Barskoon, home to three stunning mountain waterfalls. Here, we witness the raw power and beauty of nature as the cascading waters tumble down the rugged cliffs, creating a truly mesmerizing sight. As the day unfolds, we journey deeper into the Kok-Jaiyk Valley, a lush alpine paradise where we will spend the night. Surrounded by rolling green meadows and towering peaks, we settle into our cozy accommodations and enjoy a hearty dinner, immersing ourselves in the serenity of this beautiful highland retreat.

Driving time is: 5-7 hours

Day 13: Kok Jaiyk valley - Semenov Gorge – Bishkek. After enjoying breakfast in the picturesque Kok-Zhaiyk Valley, we set off for the breathtaking Semenov Gorge, one of the most stunning destinations on the northern shore of Issyk-Kul. Here, we'll have a delightful lunch surrounded by majestic mountains and fresh alpine air. We then continue our journey towards Bishkek, completing a full circle around the legendary Issyk-Kul Lake. Weather permitting, we'll make a stop for a refreshing swim in its crystal-clear waters. Our adventure concludes in Bishkek with a memorable farewell dinner, where we'll share stories, laughter, and unforgettable moments from this incredible journey. End of the tour.

Driving time is: 5-7 hours