
OFFTRAVEL - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK EXPERIENCE

Cantering through Kyrgyzstan



**horseback riding tour
to Song-Kol Lake**

6 - 12 July 2025

OFFTRAVEL

HIGHLIGHTS

- **An exciting 5-day adventure on horseback at the Song-Kol lake**
- **Amazing landscapes of the Tien-Shan and wild mountain nature**
- **Camping under the starry sky and nights spent in traditional Kyrgyz yurts**
- **Baths in the Song-Kol Lake**
- **Swimming with horses, *kok boru*, and other Kyrgyz games**
- **Wonderful culture and cuisine of Central Asia**

OVERVIEW

Kyrgyzstan is a small country located among the inaccessible mountains of Central Asia where the great mountain ranges – Tien-Shan and Pamir face each other. This is why the average altitude of the country reaches 2900 m above sea level. Despite the intense Russification lasting over two centuries, the inaccessible location allowed the Kyrgyz people to maintain their independence, expressed by unique traditions and way of life. Contrary to what Ryszard Kapuściński wrote, not every Kirgiz "descends from a horse" – many of them still lead nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

For thousands of years, horses have been the main mean of transport for Asian residents. As it is said amongst the Kyrgyz people: "a horse is the wings of a man." Horse riding is the best way to reach the remote, wild and inaccessible places of the Tien-Shan, or the Heavenly Mountains. This is a huge help as without horses it is impossible to survive in the wild, solitary mountains of Asia. A horse is a true and devoted friend, inseparably connected with its carer.

During our **horseback expedition through the Heavenly Mountains**, we will experience authentic Kyrgyzstan. We will follow mountain paths on horseback led by local shepherd-guides. We will see rolling herds of galloping horses and abundance of grazing sheep, goats and yaks. We will enter a traditional Kyrgyz yurt, where we will be warmly hosted. We will taste typical Kyrgyz dishes such as *shorpo*, *kurduk* and *beshparmak*. We will taste kumys and delicious Kyrgyz cognac. Finally, we will melt into the scenery of surrounding landscapes, high mountains, emerald lakes and vast pastures. The return to civilization will not be an easy one.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Meeting in Bishkek and transfer to the starting place of the horse riding tour

We meet in the early morning in front of the hotel or at the airport in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. We eat breakfast, complete the necessary formalities and set off by bus to the town of Kochkor hidden among the high mountains of the Tien-Shan. In the afternoon, we go for a walk around the town, visiting stalls selling the traditional Kyrgyz chirdaks (carpets) that Kochkor and the surrounding area are famous for. In the evening, dinner and stay overnight at a guesthouse.

Days 2-6: Unforgettable horse ride at the Song-Kol lake (about 150 km)

After breakfast, we take a bus to the vicinity of the Kyzart Pass. After meeting the Kyrgyz guides, we have a briefing, during which we thoroughly discuss the route, the course of the trek, and safety issues. We pack our gear, mount the horses, and set off!

Ahead of us lies a five-day horseback trek towards and around Song-Kol Lake, during which we will cover about 150 km. The route traverses diverse mountainous terrain—wide highland meadows (known as Jailoo), used by Kyrgyz people as summer pastures, as well as narrow and exposed mountain paths. While the terrain is mostly hard and dry, there may be rocky or marshy areas that will require extra caution. On the second day, we cross a pass over 3,400 meters above sea level and descend to Song-Kol Lake, situated at 3,016 meters above sea level on a vast intermountain plain. For the next three days, we ride along its grassy shores, perfect for fast gallops.

We pass by shepherds' yurts and herds of grazing animals. We stop at spots with breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains. In good weather, we take a refreshing swim, and those interested can try bathing the horses. In our free time at the overnight stops, those craving true competition can test their skills in *kok boru*, the national equestrian game of the Kyrgyz people, or in horseback races.

We ride proven Kyrgyz horses, which handle group riding and mountain terrain excellently. Each rider receives a horse matched to their skills, physical condition, and preferences. Each day, we spend 4 to 6 hours in the saddle, with a longer lunch break at shepherds' yurts halfway through the route. We use local trekking saddles, which are very comfortable and suitable for long-distance rides. We are accompanied by experienced local guides who are familiar with the terrain. They take care of the horses, including saddling and unsaddling them. Participants' help is always welcome. We travel lightly, carrying saddle bags with drinks, snacks, a raincoat, or a camera. All our gear between overnight stops is transported by a support vehicle.

The trek is open to experienced riders, skilled in riding outdoors and able to ride independently and smoothly at all three gaits. We ride in a group or loose formation, using different gaits depending on the terrain. In some areas, we may need to lead the horses on foot. If conditions allow, we may split the group into two—those who want to ride faster and those preferring a slower pace. Each group is supervised by at least one guide, and all riders stay within sight of one another.

The safety of the participants is further assured by having adequate training in first aid and an expedition first aid kit. The guides also have radio communication, as well as a satellite communicator.

During the trek, we stay in tourist yurts, where meals will also be prepared for us. This will be a great opportunity to try typical Kyrgyz cuisine, mainly based on meat dishes. Although Kyrgyz people are known for consuming large amounts of meat, preparing vegetarian meals is not a

problem. We maintain hygiene with mountain streams, the lake, or warm water heated in the yurt on a stove.

Day 7: Back to Bishkek and highlights of the Kyrgyz capital

Before noon we drive back to Bishkek. After reaching the capital of Kyrgyzstan, we stay in a hostel in the city centre. Then we go shopping at the famous Osh Bazar, where we can buy interesting souvenirs from Kyrgyzstan. We will also have a walk along the main street of Bishkek – Chui Avenue. Overnight stay at the hostel.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Country: Kyrgyzstan
Date: 6 – 12 June 2025
Duration: 7 days
Number of participants: 5 - 10 people (minimum number of participants: 5 people)

Expedition Cost: 1000 EUR (payable within 3 days from an Agreement date)

Includes:

- organization of the Expedition and support of the English-speaking Leader
- hire of the personal tourist equipment (transportation bags, saddle bags)
- providing of team equipment (camping equipment, satellite communicator, first aid kit)
- expedition package (T-shirt, multifunctional neckwear)
- health & accidents insurance
- Touristic Guarantee Found and Touristic Assistance Found fees

Expedition Cost: 900 USD

Includes:

- local transfers in rented cars
- rental of horses with the necessary equipment
- hire of local horseback riding guides
- rental of a car for luggage transportation during the horseback riding trips
- full board from day 1 till 7 of the Expedition (breakfast, lunch and dinner based on local gastronomy; during the horseback riding trips – meals prepared by a cook in camping conditions)
- accommodation (7 nights) in yurts (dormitory), guesthouse (double, triple and dorm rooms) and hotel (double rooms) according to the Itinerary

Self-organized flight to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Additional information:

- The participant should be familiar with current passport, visa and sanitary regulations as well as health requirements including recommended vaccinations, available on the website of the embassy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his / her country of residence.
- The participant should have trail horseback riding experience (multi-hours recreational trail trips) and should have walk, trot and galop riding skills.
- The expedition is organized under the rules stated in the [Terms and conditions of participating expeditions](#).

Leader: Maciej Musil

Tour Operator: Offtravel s.c.
ul. Główna 20
05-500 Piaseczno

Contact: mobile: +48 601 052 042
e-mail: wyprawy@offtravel.pl
www.offtravel.pl

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT | CHECKLIST

BAG	travel bag or big backpack (60-80 liters) (as a main luggage)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	small backpack (20-30 liters) (used as a plane hand-luggage and during sightseeing)	<input type="checkbox"/>
SLEEPING	warm sleeping bag (comfortable within temperature range as low as -5°C)	<input type="checkbox"/>
FOOTWEAR	light shoes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	sandals	<input type="checkbox"/>
	flip-flops (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
OUTERWEAR	wind protection hooded jacket (e.g. softshell)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	hoodie or long sleeve shirt	<input type="checkbox"/>
	long pants	<input type="checkbox"/>
	shorts	<input type="checkbox"/>
	warm gloves and hat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	light headgear to protect against the sun	<input type="checkbox"/>
	multifunctional neckwear (e.g. Buff)	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNDERWEAR	warm long-sleeved T-shirt and leggings (e.g. from Merino wool)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	underwear	<input type="checkbox"/>
	t-shirts (1 piece per 2-3 days)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	swimsuit	<input type="checkbox"/>
HYGIENE	quick-drying towel (large)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	quick-drying towel (small)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	hygiene utensils and cosmetics (biodegradable) in small bags	<input type="checkbox"/>
	wet wipes (biodegradable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	toilet paper	<input type="checkbox"/>
	antibacterial hand gel	<input type="checkbox"/>
	sun block (min. SPF 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	lipstick	<input type="checkbox"/>
ACCESSORIES	sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	touristic knife	<input type="checkbox"/>
	lighter	<input type="checkbox"/>
	pen and small notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
	waterproof bags and strong plastic bags (2-3 pcs.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	zip lock bags for documents and electronics	<input type="checkbox"/>
	neck pouch or hip pack (for documents and money)	<input type="checkbox"/>
KITCHEN	reusable water bottle (e.g. Nalgene) (min. 1 liter)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	cup	<input type="checkbox"/>

	spoon or spork	<input type="checkbox"/>
ELECTRONICS	flashlight (headlamp) and a set of spare batteries	<input type="checkbox"/>
	mobile phone and charger	<input type="checkbox"/>
	power bank	<input type="checkbox"/>
DOCUMENTS and MONEY	passport	<input type="checkbox"/>
	photocopy of passport (pages with photo and data)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	payment card (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	cash (undamaged notes, without inscriptions or stamps)	<input type="checkbox"/>
HORSEBACK RIDING EQUIPMENT	riding helmet	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding boots	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding pants	<input type="checkbox"/>
	raincoat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	gaiters or chaps	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding gloves	<input type="checkbox"/>
	safety vest for horse riding (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	saddle bags	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT	individual medications (after consultation with a doctor): painkillers, anti-inflammatory and antipyretics, medications for poisoning and stomach problems, cream for abrasions, electrolytes, medications taken regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	basic dressings: disposable gloves, alcohol gauze pads, plasters, sterile compresses, elastic bandage	<input type="checkbox"/>
	thermal blanket (NRC foil)	<input type="checkbox"/>