Community based tourism Kochkor
Коомчулукка негизделген туризм Кочкор
Туризм основанный на сообществах Кочкор

Jailoo Hopping to Song-Kol Lake - 8 days

Category: Horseback
Duration: 8 days
Level of difficulty: Moderate (5 passes above 3 400 m, the highest at 3600 m)
Best season: late June – mid September

Description:

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 km2 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.

Itinerary:

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 or tents.

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). On the other side, after a brief break for lunch on the trail, descend into the beautiful Sook Valley. 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.
Horse time: 6 - 7 hours
Trekking time: 7 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 — Jumgal 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: 5 hours
Trekking time: 6 hours

Day 7: Kilemche jailoo — Batai-Aral
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 east to the yurt at Batai Aral. Upon arrival, meet your host family of Kyrgyz shepherds. Meals and overnight are in a yurt of shepherds.
Horse time: 5 hours.
Trekking time: 6 hours

Day 8: Batai-Aral — Kochkor
Spend the day enjoying refreshing and well-earned rest at the lakeside. Watching and/or participation in everyday life of shepherds: milking mares; making national milk products like kymyz (a fermented mare's milk) or airan (a sour dense milk product); tending cattle. Eat a delicious lunch here, stroll along the lakeshore, and hope the legendary Song-Kol weather is kind. Afternoon transfer to Bishkek, 2 hours driving.

Services included:
- 6 nights in yurts and 1 night in tent;
- 8 lunches;
- 7 dinners;
- 7 breakfasts;
- transport services;
- 8 days horseback riding to Song-Kol lake;
- English-speaking guide;
- equipment: helmet, saddlebag, gaiters;
- tour map;
- left-luggage office.

Group size:
- 2 — 4 people

Requirements:
- trekking boots;
- weatherproof warm clothes;
- hat;
- sunscreen;
- sleeping bag and mat.