SPICE ROADS
CYCLING



TRAILS

CYCLING KAZAKHSTAN'S NOMAD TRAILS

Tour Code
KAZ-KZM

9 DAYS
8 NIGHTS

Destinations	Kazakhstan
Tour Meets	Almaty
Tour Ends	Almaty
Fly in to	Almaty International Airport (ALA)
Fly out of	Almaty International Airport (ALA)
Group Size	4-14 riders
Minimum Age	18 (on scheduled departures)

ACTIVITY PROFILE

6 Cycling days	**412** km Total cycling distance
69 km Avg distance / day	**874** m Avg climbing / day

PRICING

Price	US$ 2,900
Bike Hire (Mountain Bike)	US$ 300
Single Supplement	US$ 265

DEPARTURES

30 May - 07 Jun 2027
04 Jul - 12 Jul 2027
05 Sep - 13 Sep 2027

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- ✓ Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Snacks and drinks
- ✓ Entrance fees

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Domestic flights
- ✗ Airport pick up
- ✗ Airport drop off
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Tips
- ✗ Dinner

TRIP PROFILE

We ride a total of 412 km over six back-to-back cycling days. The cycling arena for this tour is located in the southeast of Kazakhstan which, though only a small pocket of the country, contains its most diverse array of landscapes. We experience everything from the arid, Martian-red labyrinths of the Charyn Canyon to the lush, high-altitude jailoos (summer pastures) of the Tien Shan foothills. The views are as spectacular as the rides are thrilling, taking us across a mix of dirt and gravel trails interspersed with true off-road sections on dry riverbeds and tarmac on provincial roads. To bypass the heavy traffic of the main highways and reach the best cycling terrain, we utilise vehicle transfers on Days 1 and 2. From there, the heart of the journey consists of three point-to-point rides between remote tented camps set up by our support team. On Day 7, we have a short post-ride transfer to the Chundzha Hot Springs, followed by a longer drive back to Almaty on Day 8. Non-cycling highlights include a hike through the "Valley of Castles" and admiring the panorama of Khan Tengri mirrored in the waters of Tuzkol Salt Lake. And, of course, you won't forget the incredible hospitality of the Kazakh villagers and shepherds, as well as the sight of herds of semi-wild horses that cross our path along the way.

The trip is fully supported, and your guide's expert knowledge of the area and terrain means that you always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This makes a tremendous difference, as does the constant supply of water and refreshments along the way.

Suitability: This is an active-level tour, and riders can expect to be challenged by both the route and the terrain in various ways. South-eastern Kazakhstan's rugged geography involves a sequence of steady ascents and descents, though long periods of flat or gently rolling sections provide a well-balanced overall pace. Daily distances are consistently between 65 and 75 km (not including the slightly shorter first day), which equates to full days in the saddle when factoring in surface conditions, elevation gains, and breaks. As an adventure designed specifically for mountain biking, you should have experience cycling on rough surfaces and off-road trails. This requires confident bike-handling skills, particularly on the descents. Cycling at altitudes of over 2,000 metres adds a further layer of challenge, as the thinner air can affect exertion levels and recovery times. A support vehicle follows the group throughout the journey, but please be aware that it cannot always follow directly behind; instead, it will meet the group at designated intervals. Furthermore, as the group approaches lunch or the end of the ride, the support vehicle will need to drive ahead to prepare the meal and set up the campsite. Please note that passenger seats are limited and you should come prepared to ride the full daily distances.

Biking Conditions: Riders can expect approximately 75% of the route to consist of vehicle-width dirt and gravel tracks, alongside sections of singletrack and off-road riding. The remaining 25% is made up of paved surfaces, ranging from high-quality tarmac to broken, bumpy, and cratered roads. The non-paved portions of this trip offer fantastic riding for mountain bikers, though it is important to remember that some sections consist of loose gravel and sandy patches that require careful navigation. Additionally, several descents are quite rocky and demand extra caution. While traffic on the paved sections is generally minimal, be prepared to share the road with cars, motorcycles, and buses, particularly when approaching towns (which, overall, are few and far between!). Kazakhstan can be windy, which may work for or against our favour depending on the direction; regardless, you will certainly need a buff to protect your mouth and nose from the dust on the steppe. Depending on the month you join this tour, rainfall can also have an impact, leading to muddy or slippery conditions, particularly in the late spring. It is all part of the adventure, and your expert guide will ensure you are safe at all times!

Accommodations: In Almaty (Days 1 and 8) we stay in a modern, centrally located 4 star hotel. In Bayseit (Day 2) we stay at a simple local guesthouse; low-frills but cosy. In the Charyn Canyon (Day 3) we stay at a camp managed by the National Park which is quite modern, offering a mix of bespoke tents and modular houses. Days 4, 5, and 6 are the highlight for most riders as this is when the local team sets up camp sites just for us in beautiful, remote locations. Our camps include trekking tents with mats to sleep in but please bring a sleeping bag, a camping mattress (such as a Therm-a-Rest for insulation), a sleeping bag liner for added warmth or hygiene, and a pillow. Our camps also include a dining tent, a toilet tent and even a sauna tent! On Day 7 we stay at a local hot spring resort in the region of Chundzha replete with comfortable rooms and a thermal pool. Please be aware that some older properties, while charming, may show signs of wear and tear. Room sizes may vary, and beds can be firmer than you are used to. Don't expect all hotel or campsite staff to speak English. For larger groups, we may need to use more than one accommodation and, in case of limited availability, switch to an alternative property from the one listed in the itinerary.



Day 1: Meet in Almaty

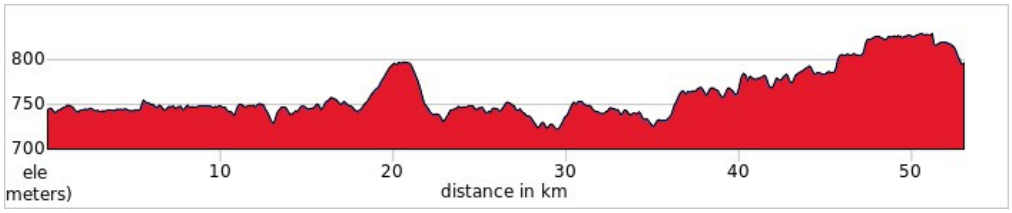
Welcome to Almaty, Kazakhstan's biggest city and the jumping-off point for any adventure into the rugged beauty of the country's great outdoors. Try to arrive as early as possible so you can explore the so-called "Garden City," where wide, leafy boulevards and Soviet-era architecture are framed by the snow-capped peaks of the Trans-Ili Alatau. You can tick off the main sights in the afternoon before we meet for our trip briefing and welcome dinner. Don't miss the candy-coloured Zenkov Cathedral in Panfilov Park or the bustling Green Bazaar. Please let us know if you require assistance with airport transfers and pre-tour hotel bookings.

Hotel Kazzhol Almaty Dinner

Day 2: Almaty - Ride to the Shelek River - Bayseit

It is time to hit the road! In the morning we transfer around an hour to the town of Esik, home to the burial mound complex of Kazakhstan's beloved "Golden Man", a 2,500-year-old warrior prince buried with a lavish display of thousands of intricate gold ornaments and ceremonial weaponry. We'll have a wander around the museum and learn about this important find which transformed our understanding of ancient steppe cultures in the region. We then drive another 45 minutes to the start point of our inaugural ride: a gentle warm-up along a paved road following the course of the Great Almaty Canal which irrigates the surrounding apple and apricot orchards. The scenery alternates between dry steppe and pockets of lush farmlands to the north and the snow-capped peaks of the Tien Shan mountains to the south. We saddle off near the banks of the Shelek River and transfer a short distance to the village of Bayseit. We spend the night at a local guesthouse around the corner from a local bazaar filled with vegetables, fruits, and Uyghur cuisine.

Local Guesthouse Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

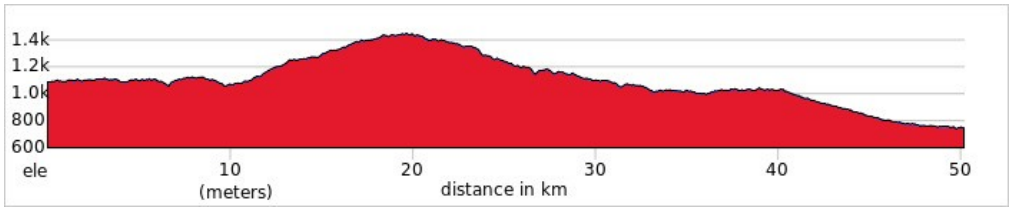


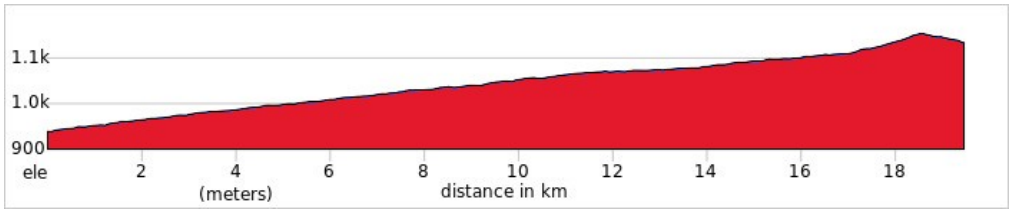
Ride 53km +422m -371m

Day 3: Bayseit - Red Mountains Ride - Charyn Canyon

We start the day with a 30-minute drive into the heart of the Boguty Mountains, an off-road cycling paradise. Also known as the "Red Mountains", we ride on gravel tracks and dry riverbeds through a Martian terrain of weathered slopes and deep gullies naturally painted in a striking palette of pink, terracotta, burgundy, and fiery red. After around 50 km, we hop in the support van and drive a little further south for the second part of today's ride: a 20 km stretch along the windswept desert plateau above the Charyn Canyon. One of Kazakhstan's most remarkable geological marvels, the Charyn Canyon is a vast labyrinth of sheer red sandstone walls and bizarre rock formations that drop away suddenly from the flat steppe. We will save an up-close exploration of the canyon for the following morning, though at dusk we'll make sure to visit a viewpoint for gorgeous sunset vistas. We spend the night in deluxe tents or small houses near the National Park Visitor Centre.

Charyn Camp Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner





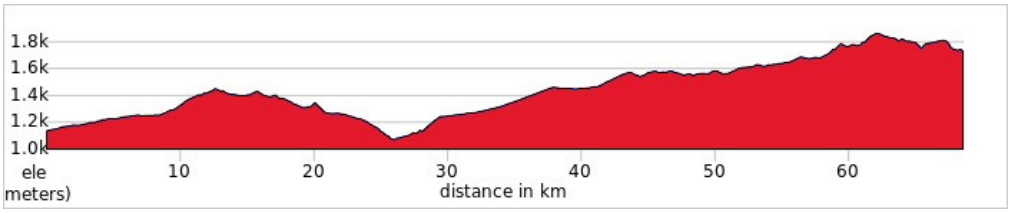
Ride 70km +920m -1016m

Day 4: Charyn Canyon - Kensu River

At the crack of dawn, we hike through the famous "Valley of the Castles", where 12 million years of water and wind erosion have sculpted striking sandstone formations. The 3 km trail winds deep into the chasm, eventually leading us to the cool, lush banks of the Charyn River. After soaking in the silence of the canyon before the crowds arrive, we'll make our way back up to the rim to our waiting bikes. For the rest of the day, we are in the saddle, dialling up the distance and elevation

gains as we head south along a mix of paved and unpaved roads into the beginnings of the Tien Shan mountain range. We witness a gradual shift in the vastness of the terrain — from barren plateaus to green, alpine meadows — and pass by a series of remote Kazakh villages. We end our ride by skirting past the shimmering waters of Lake Bestobe, from where it is only a few more kilometres to our camp, pitched on the banks of the Kensu River. Here, at close to 2,000 metres ASL, we enjoy the crisp mountain air and sleep under the great, star-filled skies of Central Asia.

Tented Camp Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

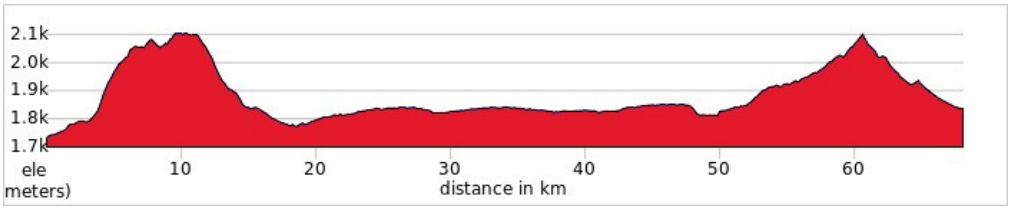


Ride 69km +1391m -794m

Day 5: Kensu River - Kegen Plateau

Today begins with an early challenge as we climb out of the valley of the Kensu River and enter the Kegen Plateau. Here, the landscape opens up into a staggering expanse of high-altitude steppe, where herds of Kazakhstan's "Five Jewels" of livestock — horses, sheep, goats, cattle and Bactrian camels — can be found roaming the grasslands or drinking by the rivers. The riding is relatively flat and non-technical for around 40 kilometres, allowing us to enjoy the wide-open scenery to the fullest before reaching the market town of Kegen, once a busy node on the Silk Road. From here, we cross a bridge and follow the road until the tarmac disappears, fanning out into a series of dirt tracks that rise into the hillslopes at the edge of the plateau. Our ride ends with a fun downhill into the green valley of the meandering Kegen River, where our campsite will be waiting for a relaxed evening in the heart of Kazakhstan's nomadic highlands.

Tented Camp Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

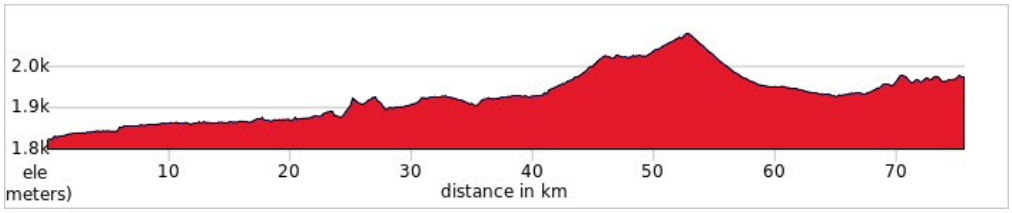


Ride 68km +875m -773m

Day 6: Kegen Plateau - Tuzkol Salt Lake

Upon breaking camp, we continue our eastward traverse of the Kegen Plateau. While today's ride is remarkably gentle with no major climbs, the Ketmen Mountains loom large to the north with spruce-dotted slopes and bare rock peaks. The first 20 km follows a rugged trail straddling the green Kegen River valley, with its ribbon of oxbow coils. We then inch closer towards the mountains, riding across the plains toward Shalkode village, which lies at the centre of a vast basin of pastures and Soviet-era agricultural grids. From here, we roll towards the shores of fabled Tuzkol, a salty montane lake and one of the country's most photogenic locations. Its glassy waters act as a mirror reflecting the snow-capped peaks of the Tien Shan – the Celestial Mountains – to the south. On a clear day, you can see the unmistakable pyramid-shaped summit of Khan Tengri ("Lord of the Sky"). At 7,010 metres, it is the highest point in Kazakhstan and has long been considered the sacred throne of the supreme deity by nomadic societies. We have a front-row seat to this epic panorama as we set up camp along the shores of Tuzkol Lake.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

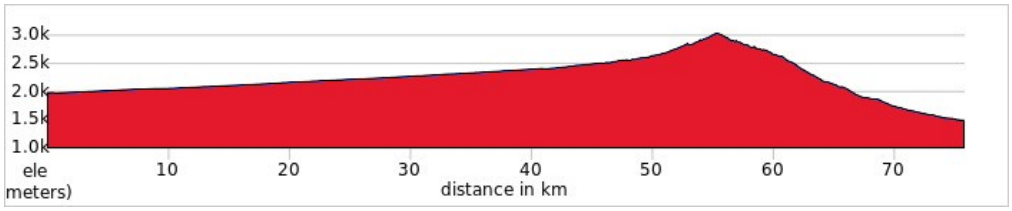


Ride 76km +538m -386m

Day 7: Tuzkol Lake - Ketmen Pass - Chundzha Hot Springs

We hope to see a splendid sunrise over the Tien Shan range from our lakeside camp before saddling up for our final ride. The first 30 km are predominantly flat as we ride through the Shalkode Valley, surrounded by summer pastures dissected by countless braids of the river. And then it's time to tackle one of Kazakhstan's most iconic climbs: the Ketmen Pass. A winding dirt track snakes its way up the rugged mountain for around 15 km (average 4% gradient) before a glorious, 20 km downhill featuring some steep, serpentine hairpins. As we descend, the landscape transforms from alpine meadows to sunbaked foothills where we spill out of a narrow gorge into a village at the northern base of the Ketmen Pass. We'll call it a day here, pack up the bikes, and drive about an hour north to the Chundzha Hot Springs. This area is home to scattered resorts offering thermal baths, all nestled within the wild, vast steppe of Kazakhstan. What better way to unwind after an epic 6 days of cycling remote nomad trails!

Hot Spring Resort Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Ride 76km +1096m -1596m

Day 8: Chundzha Hot Springs - Almaty

Today we come full circle, returning to the bustling streets of Almaty after an epic journey through Kazakhstan's southeast. We depart from Chundzha after breakfast for a four-hour drive across the plains with the distant silhouettes of the Tien Shan Mountains to the south. Once we arrive in Almaty, we have lunch followed by free time in the afternoon ticking off any remaining sights, lounging at a cafe, or stocking up on dried fruits or Kazakh chocolate at the Green Bazaar. We reconvene in the evening for a celebratory farewell dinner.

Hotel Kazzhol Almaty Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9: Almaty Departure

Time to say goodbye to Almaty and head home or travel to your next destination in Central Asia. There are plenty more surreal places to explore in the region which are just a quick flight away, such as the turquoise Silk Road cities of Uzbekistan or the high-altitude lakes of Kyrgyzstan. Please let us know if you require assistance with post-tour hotel bookings or airport transfers.

Breakfast

Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

NUTS & BOLTS

Bikes

Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you can hire bikes locally for the price listed in the tour pricing section. We provide hardtail mountain bikes from Haro or similar brands. If you bring your own bike, we suggest it is a full-suspension or hardtail mountain bike in good mechanical order. We don't suggest bringing a gravel bike for this tour due to the rough nature of some of the off-road trails. E-bikes are not available for hire on this tour.

Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

THE NITTY GRITTY

Passports and Visas

Citizens of over 70 countries can enter Kazakhstan visa-free for tourism for a stay of up to 30 days per entry. Please check here to confirm if your nationality is on the official list. If you do require a visa please let us know so we can assist you with the required supporting document (do not leave this to the last minute).

Important Entry Requirement: Even if you are on the visa-exempt list you must download the official "QazETA" mobile app to submit a digital travel authorization, complete a standard customs/health declaration, and log your flight details prior to boarding. See here for more information and follow the steps to get the app. Please fill this in 72 hours before your flight.

Please make sure that your passport is still valid for at least six months at the end of the tour and that you have at least two blank visa pages available.

Health

Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Recommended vaccinations include typhoid, polio, tetanus, and Hepatitis A. A certificate for Yellow Fever is required if arriving from an infected area within the prior six days. Please speak to your trave doctor for the most recent information.

Weather

Southeastern Kazakhstan and eastern Kyrgyzstan feature a continental climate where weather patterns shift rapidly with the seasons and based on elevation. The sweet spot for cycling is late May to early September when daytime temperatures are between 20–30°C. But the moment the sun goes down behind the mountain peaks, camping nights at high elevations can instantly plummet to 5°C or lower. Furthermore, long mountain descents can feel incredibly cold due to the windchill, even on a clear day. Quick mountain showers or afternoon storms can happen in the highlands, so a flexible layering system is essential to stay comfortable.

Altitude

Because our route climbs into the Tien Shan mountains, you may experience mild symptoms like breathlessness, headaches, nausea, or a loss of appetite before fully acclimatizing. This is completely normal when ascending up to 3,000 meters. The best remedies are to pace yourself and drink plenty of water. For most people, these symptoms naturally disappear within 24 to 48 hours once your body adjusts to the elevation.

Food

Meals are included in the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, and D = dinner. While camping meals will be prepared by the the local crew and feature Central Asian and Western cuisine. Please make sure to let us know about your preferences and allergies before the start of the tour. Please note that strict vegan, gluten-free, or severe nut-allergy diets can be difficult to cater to in remote parts of Central Asia due to limited local market ingredients. If you have strict dietary needs, we highly recommend bringing your own favorite supplementary travel snacks and staples to ensure you are fully fueled.

Drink

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Water and energy-restoring drinks are included in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer and alcohol are not available when camping and you'll need to come prepared with your own provisions.

Solo Travelers

SpiceRoads does not require you to pay a surcharge for traveling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveler of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

Money

The currency in Kazakhstan is the tenge (KZT), and in Kyrgyzstan, it is the som (KGS). Make sure to exchange or withdraw money in Almaty, as there will be no opportunities to do so once we are on the road and credit cards are not accepted in the mountains. You likely won't need much cash anyway, other than for drinks, incidentals, and tips.

GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our Booking Conditions in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please email us or call our office.

TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed

to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please email us or call our office.

BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems please send us an email, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme

circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

CONTACT US

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