

8-Day North Xinjiang Tour with Kanas

Trip overview

Embark on an immersive 8-day journey through the soul of Northern Xinjiang, where the rugged Altai Mountains meet the ancient Silk Road. This meticulously curated private tour takes you from the exotic bazaars of Urumqi to the "fairy tale" timber villages of Kanas and Hemu. You will witness the dramatic transition of landscapes—from the turquoise, color-changing waters of Heavenly Lake and Kanas Lake to the haunting, wind-sculpted formations of the World Ghost City. Beyond the scenery, this adventure offers deep cultural encounters with the Tuva nomads and a glimpse into the hidden history of the Koktokay mineral wonders. Experience the vastness, the mystery, and the unparalleled hospitality of China's great northwest in total comfort with your dedicated private guide and vehicle.

- **Durations:** 8 Days
- **Destinations:** Urumqi - Burqin - Karamay
- **Tour inquiry:** <https://asiachinatour.com/8-day-north-xinjiang-tour-with-kanas/>

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Urumqi – Journey to the Heart of the Silk Road

Welcome to Urumqi, the exotic capital of Xinjiang and the legendary gateway to Central Asia. Upon your arrival at **Diwopu International Airport (URC)** or the Urumqi Railway Station, your dedicated professional guide will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall with a personalized welcome sign.

We provide a seamless, stress-free transfer in a comfortable, climate-controlled private vehicle directly to your hotel. Along the way, your guide will share fascinating local insights and help you settle in for your upcoming adventure. After check-in, enjoy the rest of the day at your leisure—relax and adjust to the local time, or take an optional stroll through the vibrant Grand Bazaar to experience the unique sights and scents of this historic Silk Road hub.

Expert Tip:

To better adjust to "Xinjiang Time," we suggest having a lighter dinner and staying hydrated, as the dry air of the northwest can be a significant change from more humid climates.

Day 2: Urumqi – Heavenly Lake – Fuyun | Reflections of the Tianshan Mountains

After a hearty breakfast, we depart Urumqi and ascend into the majestic **Tianshan Mountains** (the "Heavenly Mountains") to visit the enchanting **Heavenly Lake (Tianchi)**. Perched at an altitude of 1,980 meters (6,500 feet), this alpine wonder is framed by towering spruce trees and the iconic, shimmering snow-capped peaks.

The best way to soak in the tranquility is with a **scenic boat ride**, allowing you to glide across the mirror-like waters and witness the magical, shifting colors reflected from the azure sky and surrounding forest.

In the afternoon, we leave the cool mountain air behind and begin our drive north toward **Fuyun County**. As the urban landscape of Urumqi fades, you will witness the dramatic transition of Xinjiang's geography—moving from the rugged Tianshan range into the vast, open plains that lead toward the Altai region. Upon arrival in Fuyun, check into your hotel and enjoy a restful evening in this quiet hub, the gateway to the stunning Koktokay National Park.

Expert Tip:

Temperatures at Heavenly Lake can be much cooler than in Urumqi; please keep a windproof jacket or light sweater handy for the boat ride to ensure your comfort.

Day 3: Fuyun – Koktokay National Geopark – Burqin | Geological Wonders & Hidden History

After breakfast, we head to the magnificent **Koktokay (Keketuohai) National Geopark**, a UNESCO Global Geopark renowned for its dramatic landscapes. We will spend the morning exploring the **Irtys Grand Canyon**, where you'll be mesmerized by the unique "Granite Peaks"—massive, bell-shaped mountains formed by eons of erosion. Stroll along the emerald-green **Hu'erci River**, flanked by vibrant, colorful forests that create a breathtaking backdrop for photography.

Next, we delve into a fascinating piece of modern history at **No. 3 Mining Pit**, the largest of its kind in China. Once a closely guarded state secret and often referred to as the "Jerusalem of Geologists," this site contains an incredible concentration of rare minerals. Your guide will share the compelling story of the mine's critical contributions during the 1960s and its global significance in the field of mineralogy.

In the afternoon, we depart the rugged Altai Mountains and drive toward **Burqin**, the scenic "Fairytale Town" and the essential gateway to Kanas. Upon arrival, you may enjoy a relaxed evening exploring the bustling **Five-Colored Riverbank (Wucaitan)** or sampling local grilled cold-water fish at the night market.

Expert Tip:

This day involves a fair amount of walking through the geopark; we recommend wearing sturdy, comfortable walking shoes to safely navigate the canyon trails and mining site.

Day 4: Burqin – Kanas Lake – Tuva Family Visit | The Emerald of the Altai

In the morning, we depart for the legendary **Kanas Lake**, a high-altitude alpine lake famous for its "color-changing" waters and the myth of the "Kanas Lake Monster." We begin our exploration by ascending to the **Fish Pavilion (Guanyu Pavilion)**, the highest vantage point in the area. From here, you will be rewarded with a breathtaking panoramic view of the entire crescent-shaped lake and the surrounding primeval Taiga forest.

To truly immerse yourself in the serenity of Kanas, we will **skip the crowded shuttle buses** and instead enjoy a leisurely **8-km (5-mile) professional-guided hike**. This scenic trail winds through the heart of the valley, offering the best perspectives of the three most iconic bays: **Camel Bell Bay, Moon Bay, and Dragon Bay**. You'll have ample time to capture the perfect reflection of the golden birches and snow peaks in the turquoise Kanas River.

In the afternoon, we step into the past with a visit to a traditional **Tuva family's wooden cabin** in Kanas Village. The Tuvas are an ancient ethnic group believed to be descendants of Genghis Khan's troops. Over a cup of traditional milk tea, you'll have the rare opportunity to **chat with the locals**, listen to the haunting melodies of the "Sube" (flute), and learn about their unique nomadic customs and daily life in this remote mountain paradise.

Expert Travel Tips:

To ensure a comfortable and respectful journey through the vast landscapes of Northern Xinjiang, we recommend dressing in layers to accommodate the significant temperature shifts between the sunny valleys and the alpine heights of Kanas. While the region officially follows Beijing Time, the natural rhythm of life here is roughly two hours later, so embracing a slower pace will help you fully enjoy the vibrant local bazaars and stunning sunsets. Our team ensures seamless travel in climate-controlled vehicles, but we encourage staying well-hydrated and maintaining a respectful approach during cultural encounters with local ethnic groups, such as the Tuva families, to make your Silk Road adventure truly rewarding.

Day 5: Kanas – Hemu Village | A Journey into the Ancient Taiga Forest

After breakfast, we depart the shores of Kanas for **Hemu Village**, one of the most remote and picturesque settlements in China. Our exploration begins at a charming **Tuva Heritage Museum** housed in a traditional log cabin. Here, through a curated collection of historical photographs, traditional ethnic garments, and ancient daily artifacts, you will gain a deep understanding of the Tuva people's unique history and nomadic lifestyle. The highlight of the visit is an exclusive **performance by a local Tuva band**, featuring the hauntingly beautiful sounds of the *Khumai* (throat singing) and the *Suur* (flute).

In the afternoon, we immerse ourselves in the village's fairytale atmosphere with a **3-km (2-mile) guided hike** along the pristine Hemu River. As you wander through the valley, you will witness the timeless scenes of rural life—cattle grazing freely by the riverbanks and children playing among the sheep in front of their weathered wooden houses. This is the perfect time to capture the golden light as it hits the timber cabins, creating a scene of unparalleled peace and tranquility.

Expert Tip:

Hemu is world-famous for its sunrise and morning mist over the wooden cabins. We recommend an early night so you can join your guide tomorrow morning for a short hike to the village's viewing platform; the sight of smoke curling from chimneys in the dawn light is a photographer's dream.

Day 6: Hemu – Burqin | Misty Sunrises & The Palette of Wucaitan

Wake up to the ethereal beauty of **Hemu Village** in the early morning, when a thick, fairytale-like mist floats through the valley, veiling the wooden cabins in a soft white glow. It is the perfect time for a quiet stroll or to head to the viewing platform to witness the village slowly awakening as the first rays of sun pierce through the fog.

Afterward, we begin our scenic drive back toward **Burqin**, stopping at the extraordinary **Wucaitan (Five-Color Shore)**. Here, you will witness a striking geographical contrast along the banks of the Irtysh River: the northern bank features a vibrant, lush forest of poplars, while the southern bank showcases a dramatic **Yardang landform** with multi-colored clay ridges carved by centuries of wind and water.

In the evening, you will have free time to explore **Burqin Town**. With its unique architecture and charming streets, the town exudes a distinct **Russian flavor**, offering a delightful atmosphere to enjoy a final evening in the Altai region.

Expert Tip:

The colors of Wucaitan are most vibrant and "five-colored" during the "Golden Hour" just before sunset. We suggest ensuring your camera batteries are fully charged, as the contrast between the burning orange ridges and the deep green river valley provides some of the best landscape photography opportunities of the entire trip.

Day 7: Burqin – Karamay | Whispers of the Ghost City & The Golden Desert

Today, we journey from Burqin toward the legendary oil city of **Karamay**. En route, we explore the eerie and magnificent **World Ghost City (Urho)**, recognized as the premier Yardang landform in China. As the winds from Siberia sweep across the desolate landscape, you will witness the haunting power of nature. The city earns its name from the chilling sounds created when the wind whistles through the jagged rock formations—resembling "baby's cries, women's screams, and angry yells." These naturally sculpted pillars and pavilions rising from the desert floor create a surreal, cinematic atmosphere.

As we continue our drive to Karamay, the landscape transforms again. You will see thousands of **oil field pumpjacks** (the "nodding donkeys") dotting the horizon. This sight serves as a powerful reminder of the hidden riches mother nature has bestowed beneath the seemingly lonely and desolate surface of the Gobi Desert.

Expert Tip:

The World Ghost City is very exposed with very little shade, so we recommend wearing a wide-brimmed hat and applying sunscreen before the tour. To capture the most dramatic photos of the rock formations, try using a wide-angle lens to emphasize the vast scale of the Yardang towers against the endless desert sky.

Day 8: Karamay – Urumqi Airport – Departure | Final Views of the Silk Road

On your final day, your personal guide and driver will provide a smooth and comfortable transfer from Karamay directly to **Urumqi Diwopu International Airport (URC)**. As you drive across the vast landscapes one last time, you can reflect on the incredible journey from the alpine lakes of the Altai to the desert wonders of Karamay. We will ensure you arrive at the terminal with ample time to check in for your flight home or to your next exciting destination, marking a seamless

conclusion to your unforgettable Xinjiang adventure.

Expert Tip:

The drive from Karamay to Urumqi Airport takes approximately 4 to 5 hours depending on traffic; we recommend scheduling your departure flight for late afternoon or evening to ensure a stress-free transition without rushing your final morning in Xinjiang.

Booking Policy

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation by Customer

- Cancellation received before 60 days: FREE of charge
- Cancellation received from 30 days to 59 days prior arrival date: 20% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 15 days to 29 days prior arrival date: 40% of total rate
- Cancellation received from 7 days to 14 days prior arrival date: 70% of total rate
- Cancellation received less than 7 days prior arrival date or No show: 100% of total rate

Children Policy

The rate for children applicable for one child sharing a twin or double cabin with two adults.

- For infant (<04 years old): Free of Charge
- 04 - 11 years old without bed: 50% adult rate
- 04 - 11 years old with extra bed: 75% adult rate
- Above 11 years old with extra bed: 100% adult rate

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