

Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan Explorer



TRIP OVERVIEW

Journey from the enchanting natural beauty of the glacial mountain ranges of Almaty and Bishkek, to the magnificent desert canyons on the South of Issyk Kul Lake. Immerse yourself in the culture of the nomadic people of the central Asian steppes and discover the intersection of the ancient and the modern in Nur-Sultan. A host of wonderful historical and cultural sites across these two countries will make this an unforgettable experience.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as airline and hotel details and visa requirements.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Nur-Sultan

Depart London on your scheduled overnight flight to Kazakhstan's capital city, previously known as Astana, now Nur-Sultan, via Istanbul.

DAY 2: Nur-Sultan B/L/D

Upon arrival at the airport early this morning, you will be met by your local guide and transferred to your hotel. Enjoy a relaxing breakfast and morning before being taken on a walking tour of the city after lunch. As well as taking in the architectural wonders that crown this sprawling metropolis, a trip to the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, famed for its blue-glass-and-white-marble façade, will allow for a full historical and cultural immersion from ancient to modern times. Replete with an incredible collection of artefacts across several themed halls and numerous interactive displays, there is much to discover at this magnificent museum. Be sure to check out the Golden Hall which houses thousands of Bronze Age ornaments, including the famed 'Golden Man' - a 3rd or 4th century warrior whose gold clad remains were uncovered in 1969 and remain the prevailing national symbol of Kazakhstan. After this, observe the awe inspiring Nur Alem monument; an utterly breathtaking example of human ingenuity, this legacy of the 'Future Energy' Expo 2017 stands at an astonishing height of 80 meters and is the world's largest spherical building. Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner.

DAY 3: Nur-Sultan B/L

Set off on a tour offering a new perspective on the city, including a visit to the majestic Palace of Peace and Accord - a 77 metre high pyramid and one of Kazakhstan's most striking cultural landmarks. An imposing symbol of unity, it hosts delegates from all of the world's major religions in its circular chamber and houses a 1,300 seat opera house. From here, go on to the architectural brilliance that is the Baiterek Tower and ascend this iconic landmark for breathtaking panoramic views of the city, 90 meters up. Next, make your way to the mesmerising Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre; with its fabulous neo-futurist design and huge variety of things to do under its tent, it is an urban paradise. Return to the hotel for a leisurely afternoon.

DAY 4: Nur-Sultan to Almaty B/L

Take a flight to Almaty, the former capital and Kazakhstan's largest city. Once settled, the full splendour of the city will be revealed on an afternoon tour, including visits to the iconic Independence Square - the Soviet influenced old quarter, featuring the bright and quirky Ascension Cathedral, comprised entirely of wood without a single nail; Panfilov Park, named after

the General who orchestrated the famous defence against the advancing German army during World War 2, and the enchanting Museum of Kazakh Musical Instruments.

DAY 5: Almaty B/L/D

After breakfast, venture to the national park, Ile Alatau and set off on a scenic drive to the Medeo skating rink - nicknamed the 'Factory of Records' due to 138 world records having been set here. Continue your journey up the mountainside to the alpine resort of Shymbulak; at 2,260 meters above sea level, delight in a visual feast of incredible views. Today's last stop is Kok Tobe, enjoy a cable car ride and admire magnificent panoramic view of the city.

DAY 6: Almaty B/L

The final day in Almaty ends in spectacular fashion. After a morning at leisure, a drive to the Tien before returning to your hotel you will visit the only falcon farm in Kazakhstan, where you will enjoy a spectacular show with specially trained hawks. Hunting with hawks is one of the unique features of the Kazakh way of life.

DAY 7: Almaty to Karakol, Kyrgyzstan B/L/D

Today travel from Almaty to Karakol on the eastern tip of Kyrgyzstan with a stopover at the Charyn Canyon; dubbed the mini Grand Canyon, it is a fascinating contrast to the snow-peaked mountains of Almaty. Venture into "Valley of Castles" to see the canyon from the inside, before reaching the Charyn river and the eco-village with a complex of yurts and an open air cafés. Continue onward to Karakol, where you will have an evening at leisure.

DAY 8: Karakol B/L/D

Begin your Karakol city tour at the Dungan Mosque - a colourful century old wooden edifice in the Chinese Buddhist architectural style, yet built in the Kyrgyz traditional wood feathering style, instead of metal nail construction. Later, visit the striking Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, before driving to Jeti-Oguz canyon where you can enjoy a light hike through the magnificent canyon of red sandstone. Return to the hotel for dinner and an evening of leisure.

DAY 9: Karakol to Chon Kemin B/L/D

After breakfast, take a scenic drive to Chon Kemin valley along the North Shore of Issyk Kul Lake. En route, familiarize yourself with tremendous geographical feats at the Museum of Nikolai Przhevalsky, where you can see 19th century artefacts from this famous Russian explorers' great expeditions in Central Asia and West China. Next, visit Cholpon-Ata - an impressive site of ancient rock carvings, followed by a trip to the temple of the Scythian civilizations which existed from 900 BC until 400 AD. Continue your journey to the lush mountains of Chon Kemin before arriving at your Guest House accommodation.

DAY 10: Chon Kemin to Bishkek B/L/D

On the way to Bishkek, make a stop near Tokmak city to visit the striking ruins of the medieval city Balasagun and marvel at its famous Burana tower; formerly one of three capitals of the Karakhanid Empire, Balasogun was one of the most developed cities during the peak of the Great Silk Road era. After this, take a look at a collection of Balbals, Turkic ancient tombs before arriving at Bishkek to tonight's hotel.

DAY 11: Bishkek to Ala Archa National Park B/L/D

After breakfast, get to know the capital city on an exciting sightseeing tour. Visit Manas Monument - the main national hero of the Kyrgyz people. Next, sample the State History Museum and take a walking tour around main Ala Too Square to watch the ceremony of the changing of the Guard of Honor. Finish at the Old Square, containing the sole remaining

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to guest houses. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed. Please note hotels in Karakol and The Guest House in Chon Kemin do not have air condition.

Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

Please note: the hotels listed are provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner where applicable will be taken at local restaurants or at your hotel. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Your initial flight is to Nusratana Nazarbayev International Airport via Istanbul with Turkish Airlines (TK), departing from London Heathrow Terminal 2.

IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Baggage Allowance

Each passenger is entitled to 20KG of hold luggage plus 1 item of hand luggage not exceeding (Max 7kg - 55cm/40cm/ 23cm) in size. Weight restrictions will be finalized on E-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check-in. Check-in should be at least 3 hours before departure.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On arrival in Nusratana, you will be met by the representative from our local agent, **Dolores Travel Group**. This representative will be holding a sign displaying "Mercury Holidays" and will then escort you to your transfer vehicle. Your national guide will be on hand 24 hours a day should you have any queries. However, if you need to contact your representative during your stay the details are:

Dolores Travel Group

104A, Kichik Beslagach str.
Tashkent, 100025, Uzbekistan

Telephone Number (office): 00998 78 1208883
Telephone Number (mobile): 00998 99 858 8894 (Anna)

Parliament House in Central Asia. After lunch, drive to the captivating Ala Archa National Park situated in the Tien Shan mountains. You will be in the alpine gorge through which the fast flowing Ala Archa River runs. The gorge is flanked by tall, snow-covered, peaks with steep-sided, forested, mountain slopes. In the National Park you can easily hike along the main gorge of Ala Archa and back to enjoy views of magnificent peaks of the Tien Shan. Finish with dinner at a local restaurant and enjoy a traditional folklore show, before returning back to your hotel.

DAY 12: Bishkek to UK or extension B

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your return flight home via Istanbul, or continue on to your chosen extension.



WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visas

A visa is not required for your trip to Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan (passport validity can be no less than 6 months). Further advice should be sought from the applicable tourist authority for other nationalities and for general queries. We strongly advise you check your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy for the most up-to-date guidelines regarding passport validity.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for **Dolores Travel Group**

KAZAKHSTAN

Mobile: 007 701 736 09 41 (Maria Pyanykh)
Office: 007 727 232 23 14

KYRGYZSTAN

Mobile: 00996 557 520 193 (Sofia Rafikova)
Office: 00996 755 520 193 (Maria Ermatova)

booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call **0800 781 4237** and quote '**WK830**' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Tour Guides - Local Guides

This is a fully escorted tour meaning that you will be met by a local guide in each of the cities that you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

Tipping

It is at your customary to tip both your driver and guide. We would recommend \$2-\$3 per person per day for the guide and \$1-\$2 per person per day for the driver. This is a total of \$44 per person to budget for tips on your trip. Tips will be collected at the end of your tour.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include; www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with a good level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves climbing of steep stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties. All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. Our tour paces are marked with dots out of 3, with the differences being as follows:

- 1 Dot the tour is Easy-Going
- 2 Dots the tour is Intermediate
- 3 Dots the tour is Advanced

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Explorer is rated as 2 Dots meaning that the tour pace is Intermediate. A good level of fitness is required as you may be on your feet for approximately four hours in a day, though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and will vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, and may be getting on and off coaches, trains and boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. You will stay in variety of hotels throughout the tour. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunscreen, insect repellent & wide-brimmed hat in the summer months
- Waterproof, lightweight jacket, lightweight clothing, sweater and swimwear
- Warm clothing during the winter months
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera and charger
- Antibacterial hand gel

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 30. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Kazakhstan is the Kazakhstani tenge (KZT). The currency in Kyrgyzstan is the Kyrgyzstani som (KGS). We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. Cash machines are available in all the major cities to withdraw money in the local currency. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. Approximately £400- £500 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you may be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card, you may be asked for a cash deposit. MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels. In Kyrgyzstan MasterCard is not widely accepted, it is recommended to use Visa Card.

Itinerary Changes

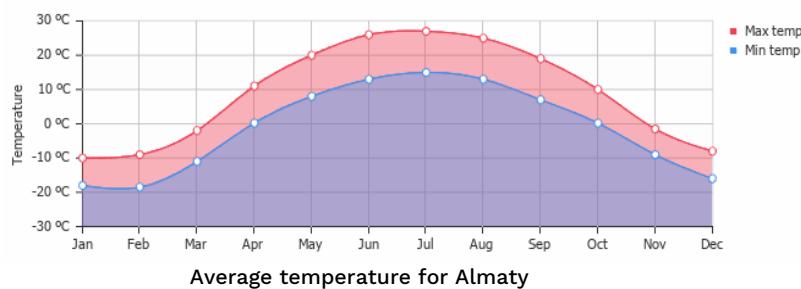
The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction &/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

- Binoculars
- Small day pack for excursions
- Personal toiletries and first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin etc
- Travel plug adapter – the electricity supply is (220V). You will need a plug adapter

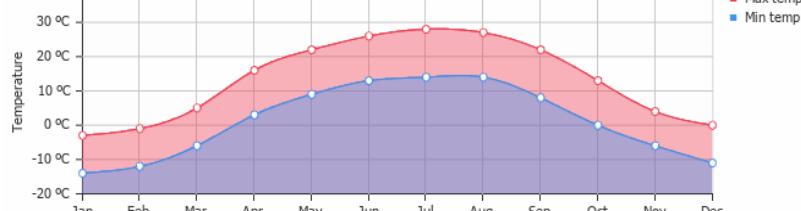
WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.

Average temperature for Astana



Average temperature for Almaty



Shymkent Otrar & Turkistan Mini Tour Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

On this 5-night extension, immerse yourself in Central Asia's finest exhibition of vibrant Islamic architecture, a country's rich culture laying in the heart of the ancient Silk Road.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your Shymkent Otrar & Turkistan mini tour extension.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 12: Bishkek to Shymkent B

After breakfast, transfer to Korday border and drive to Shymkent city via the Korday border and Taraz. Along the way, stop off at Shymkent and visit the UNESCO listed Aisha-bibi and Bibi-Khanym mausoleums.

Day 13: Shymkent B

Tour Kazakhstan's third city - Shymkent and witness the magnificent Archaeological Museum, Green Market and Flower market, before heading to Central Square, Memory Alley and the Museum of Political Repression.

Day 14: Shymkent to Otrar & Turkistan B

Journey to Turkistan, stopping off en-route at the Asian ghost town, Otrar, formerly an important trading centre of the Great Silk Road. Next, drive to the Mausoleum Arystan Bab followed by a trip to the mosque, with an afternoon visit to the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, discovering medieval bathhouses and the underground mosque.

Day 15: Shymkent to Almaty B

Enjoy some free time, before transferring to the railway station and taking the overnight train to Almaty.

Day 16: Almaty B

Upon arriving in Almaty in the morning, transfer to your hotel and spend the day as you wish or take the optional excursion to Kazakh ethno village.

Day 17: Almaty to UK B

Enjoy some free time, before transferring to the airport for your flight back to the UK.

Hotel Information

Shymkent city (3 nights) 4★ Aidana Plaza

Address: Beytishilik Ave 13, Shymkent, Kazakhstan
Telephone number: 007 7252 77 77 73

Train - Shymkent to Almaty (1 night) Talgo train

2 bed-compartment, upper bed has a ladder. Toilets are outside the cabins and are shared. A fully equipped Bistro car and Dining car that offer on board catering and restaurant service.

Almaty City (3 nights) 4★ Novotel Almaty

Address: Dostyk Ave 104a, Almaty 050000, Kazakhstan

Telephone number: 007 727 355 3838

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking.

Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotel listed is provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any meals not included, drinks and personal purchases such as souvenirs and laundry.

Tour Guides

This add-on is escorted by a tour guide.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.



FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information call us on **0843 224 0723**

Tashkent City Stay

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

A major stop on the famous Silk Road, Tashkent has a rich and interesting history which extends over 2,000 years. Complete your tour in the Uzbek capital city of Tashkent, on this 4-night extension.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your add-on in Tashkent.

Hotel Information

Before your stay in Tashkent you will spend 1 night in Bishkek at the 4★ Plaza Hotel on Bed and Breakfast (please refer to the main tour details).

You will then catch a flight to Tashkent.

Your stay in Tashkent will take place at the 4★ Shodlik Palace on Bed and Breakfast (one dinner is included). Located in the centre of Tashkent city, this hotel features a sauna and a fitness centre. It also offers air-conditioned rooms with free Wi-Fi and a TV. The Pakhtakor Metro Station is 250 metres away.

Hotel Information

Tashkent (3 nights) 4★ Shodlik Palace

Address: 5, Pakhtakor Street Navoi Avenue, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Telephone number: 00998 71 120-72-92

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotel listed is provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Please note

This extension takes place after your main tour.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Uzbekistan is the Uzbek Soum (UZS). The Pound Sterling is difficult to exchange and most currency exchange bureaus do not carry much change, so we recommend that you take new US Dollar notes with you in small denominations.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any meals not included, drinks and personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry and any snacks.

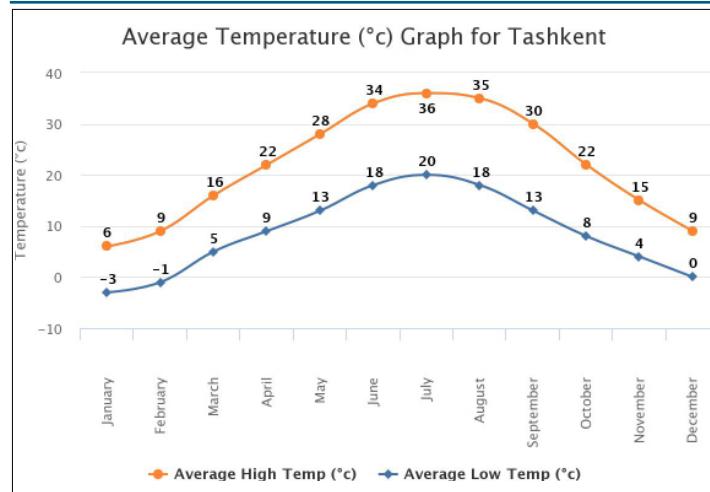
Tour Guides

Your stay in Tashkent is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Customs and Immigration

You will be given proof of stay at each hotel that you visit during your tour. Please keep these forms together with your passport should immigration control want to see these on departure.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE



FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information, call us on **0843 224 0723**

Istanbul City Stay

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0843 224 0723



TRIP OVERVIEW

Situated with one foot in Europe and one in Asia, Istanbul is a fascinating mixing pot of cultures, sounds and experiences. Explore this enigmatic city for yourself during this extension.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your stay in Istanbul.

Hotel Information (3 nights)

Your stay in Istanbul will be at one of the following hotels on Bed & Breakfast;

3★ Ilkay Hotel. This charming hotel enjoys an ideal location on the historical peninsula known as 'The Old City' and is within walking distance of cultural delights.

Address: Hoca Paşa, Hüdavendigar Cd. 28-30, 34210 Fatih/Istanbul, Turkey
Telephone number: 0090 212 511 22 70

4★ Hotel Lalahan Istanbul. Lalahan is a charming boutique hotel with its historical building dating back to 1880s. The hotel is located in the 'Old Town' of Istanbul, perfect for exploring the surrounding area.

Address: Hoca Paşa, No:, Hüdavendigar Cd. No:26, 34110 Fatih/Istanbul, Turkey
Telephone number: 0090 212 512 13 01

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotel listed is provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any meals not included, drinks and personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry and any snacks.

Tour Guides

Your stay in Istanbul is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Currency Exchange

The currency in Turkey is Turkish Lira, however we recommend that you take GBP (Euros are also accepted). Cash machines are available in all the major cities to withdraw money in the local currency.

Visas

A visa is required for entry into Turkey. British passport holders will need to obtain an e-visa for travel to Turkey. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is approximately £30.00 per person. The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 120 days before your proposed travel date and takes around 10 working days to issue. It is valid for a 180 day multiple entry stay from the date of arrival, with a maximum of 90 days per stay. When calling the Travel Visa Company, they will advise you of any changes to the fees or the procedure. They will also advise you of all information they will require in order to apply for the visa. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months before you enter Turkey.

On Arrival

On arrival in Istanbul, you will be met by the representative from our local agent, **Ulusoy Travel**. This representative will be holding a sign displaying "Mercury Holidays" and will then escort you to your transfer vehicle. This extension is not escorted however, If you need to contact a representative from Ulusoy Travel during your stay the details are:

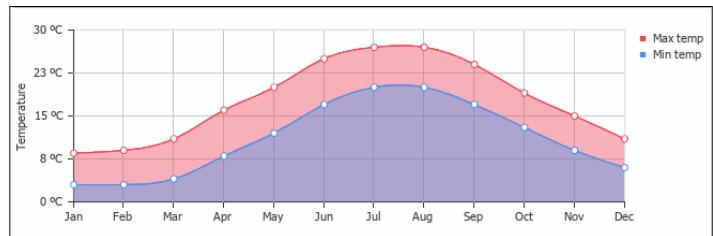
Ulusoy Travel

Çalıkuşu Sokak No: 16 1. Levent
İstanbul, Turkey.
Contact number: 0090 212 283 40 83

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for **Ulusoy Travel**:
Mrs.Gozde Samanci. Contact number: 0090 533 774 9675
Mr.Kenan Erdogan. Contact number: 0090 543 484 2402

WEATHER AND CLIMATE



FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

For any further enquiries or for more information, call us on **0843 224 0723**