# Xinjiang Northern Loop

Urumqi - Turpan - Kanas - 9 days / 8 nights

Sample itinerary - Subject to availability

Travel style: tailor made

## Overview

Desert depression to alpine lake, by way of the bazaar.

## The journey

Nine days across northern Xinjiang's extremes - the Turpan depression at 150 metres below sea level, the alpine pastures around Kanas at 1,300 above it, and Urumqi's bazaar between the two. A long, logistics-heavy framework that earns its days, best from May to early October.

## Highlights

- Kanas Lake from the Fish-Watching Pavilion
- Hemu village at dusk and dawn
- Turpan's karez wells, Emin Minaret and Jiaohe ruins
- The International Grand Bazaar, Urumqi
- Heavenly Lake under the Bogda peaks

## Day by day



### Day 1 - Arrive Urumqi

Met at the airport and settled in the centre; Urumqi is Asia's most inland city and it opens in the evening. The International Grand Bazaar at dusk - the tower lit, the food-street grills going, dried-fruit sellers calling across the central square - is the first-night walk, with dinner eaten standing up at whatever smells best. The proper shopping expedition comes later, guided.

Meals: - - Hotel: Urumqi, city centre

### Day 2 - Down to Turpan

The road drops below sea level within two hours, past wind farms and into the depression's heat. The karez museum explains the underground channels that made this oasis possible, then the wells themselves, still running; the Emin Minaret in the afternoon light; and a village lunch in the grape trellises where the fruit is actually grown. The night market runs late and eats well.

Meals: B, L - Hotel: Turpan, grape valley side

### Day 3 - Jiaohe, back over the mountains

Jiaohe at opening, before the heat: a complete earthen city standing after two thousand years because no one has lived in it to knock it down - the guide walks it as the river-island fortress it was. Back over the mountains to Urumqi for the afternoon Xinjiang Museum, whose Tarim mummies and silk-road rooms are quietly among the best in China. Evening free.

Meals: B - Hotel: Urumqi

### Day 4 - Fly north to Kanas

The morning flight to Altay crosses into entirely different country; the drive in passes Kazakh pasture and the zones' shuttle buses carry the group through the forest to the lake. By late afternoon the first lakeside walk - birch stands, the river meadow below the guesthouses, and the first sight of the water's improbable turquoise. Zone accommodation is simple, as stated at booking.

Meals: B - Hotel: Kanas, scenic zone



### Day 5 - The lake, then Hemu

Morning up to the Fish-Watching Pavilion for the long view down the lake's bends - the water that feeds the legends as well as the photographs - then the shuttle over the pass to Hemu village: log cabins, poplar fences, and the Tuva families who have herded this valley for generations. The sunset platform fills early; the village after dark belongs to the locals and the stoves.

Meals: B - Hotel: Hemu, Tuva village

### Day 6 - Dawn mist, fly south

Hemu's dawn mist in the valley is the photograph the serious cameras came for; the rest of the group can watch it with tea. A slow morning in the village, the drive back to Altay, and the afternoon flight to Urumqi with the evening free - the lamb-skewer streets near the hotel are the honest dinner.

Meals: B - Hotel: Urumqi



### Day 7 - Heavenly Lake

A day out to Tianchi under the Bogda snowfields: the cableway or the zigzag road up to the alpine lake, the western-row walkways, and a long unhurried afternoon doing very little at altitude - boat, tea, and the Kazakh family stalls by the shore. Back in Urumqi by evening; dinner is whatever the group did not eat at the bazaar.

Meals: B - Hotel: Urumqi

### Day 8 - The bazaar, properly

The International Grand Bazaar with the guide who shops there: how to tell raised-ground dried fruit from machine-dried, which jade certificates mean what, and what a fair price sounds like in any language. Erdaoqiao's streets around it carry the same trade at local prices. The afternoon packs the purchases; the evening celebrates them over a proper Uyghur dinner.

Meals: B - Hotel: Urumqi

### Day 9 - Depart

Transfer to the airport in good time - Xinjiang's check-in security routines deserve the margin, as the notes said at booking. The coordination team stays reachable until boarding. This loop pairs naturally with the Hexi Corridor route westwards for groups building a full silk-road summer; the rail link runs through the corridor.

Meals: B - Hotel: -

## What makes this journey different

- Turpan explained by the people who farm it - the karez wells, the Emin Minaret and the grape trellises of a Uyghur village.
- Kanas and the Tuva village of Hemu with nights inside the scenic zone - the lake before the day visitors, the village at dusk and dawn.
- The International Grand Bazaar with a guide who shops there: dried fruit, carpets, jade - and what things should actually cost.
- Heavenly Lake under the Bogda peaks as the slow-day centrepiece, not a rushed half-day.

## Where you stay

Four-star in Urumqi; the best available in Turpan; Kanas and Hemu nights inside the scenic zone in Tuva-family guesthouses or zone hotels - simple, wood-heated, and the only way to have the lake to yourself. Expectations set before booking.

## Food & local life

Lamb skewers and big-plate chicken, Uyghur polo rice and tandoor naan, Turpan's grapes and melons in season, and Kazakh milk tea with dried cheese in the pastures.

## Included

+ Accommodation in the agreed grade, with breakfast
+ Private guide and private vehicle on touring days
+ All internal transport between cities as stated - high-speed rail, internal flights and transfers
+ Entrance fees for the sites named in the itinerary
+ Meals as stated (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
+ Drinking water in the vehicle, and a 24-hour emergency contact while the group is in China
+ Internal flight Urumqi-Altay return
+ Scenic-zone entries as stated (Kanas, Hemu, Tianchi)

## Not included

- International flights to and from China
- Chinese visa or visa-application costs
- Travel insurance, including medical and cancellation cover
- Meals not marked in the itinerary, drinks and personal spending
- Anything listed under subject to confirmation until it is confirmed
- Scenic-zone shuttle buses inside Kanas, Hemu and Tianchi (quoted as issued)
- Horse riding in Hemu (arranged on site)

## To be confirmed with suppliers

- Kanas and Hemu guesthouse standards and heating rules (the zones close roughly late October)
- flight times Urumqi-Altay and baggage allowance
- Hemu night-entry and shuttle schedules
- hotel security-check routines across Xinjiang - allow extra time at each check-in

## Customisation

Every framework can be re-built around your client's dates, party size, hotel grade, pace and interests - or combined with scheduled small group departures where budget matters. Send us the brief and we will quote in writing.