



GUEST ITINERARY

CURATED CHINA JOURNEY
Dragon Discover


Full Xinjiang Arc


16 Days 15 Nights


Silk Road by Luxury Train


BEFORE YOU GO


Key Travel Prep

 Please book your own flights to Chengdu or Lanzhou (boarding city) and return flights from the same city. Guests joining in Urumqi on Day 2 should fly to Urumqi Diwopu International Airport.

 Travel accident insurance is included (300,000 RMB per person). We recommend supplemental medical and evacuation coverage for international travel.

 Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure. Coverage varies across remote parts of Xinjiang.

 Check China visa requirements before booking. Foreign nationals cannot visit the central and southern sections of the Duku Highway — an alternative route via train is arranged for those days.

 Bring any personal prescriptions needed. Carry basic remedies for stomach discomfort and altitude adaptation — some areas are above 3,000m.

 Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking. Xinjiang cuisine features lamb, beef, and wheat-based dishes. Halal dietary traditions are widespread.

See the full "Prepare for Travel" section later in Before Booking.

Overview

Sixteen days across Xinjiang by luxury tourist train, from the alpine lakes of Kanas to the Pamir Plateau and the ancient Silk Road cities of Kashgar and Turpan.

The Panda Train Jinxiu Tianfu carries you between regions overnight while ground days bring Tuvan villages, the Duku Highway across the Tianshan, a sunset concert inside a ruined Silk Road fortress, and a Tajik family visit at the edge of three countries. Seven overnight train legs and eight hotel nights — every major transit is handled while you sleep, so you wake up in a different landscape each morning without the fatigue of long road days.

Trip Snapshot

Accommodation

7 train nights in sleeper cabins. 8 hotel nights: 5-star in Urumqi, Yining, Kashgar. Alpine guesthouses in Hemu and Kanas. 4-star in Tashkurgan and Turpan.

Airport Transfers

Airport transfers are not included. Meet at the designated train station in Chengdu or Lanzhou at the scheduled departure time. The tour ends at Chengdu or Lanzhou station.

Guide & Transport

Luxury Panda Train for all seven overnight legs. Air-conditioned coaches at destinations. Local guides at each stop. Medical staff on board.

Meals

All meals included: 15 breakfasts, 30 mains. Train dining plus Xinjiang Welcome Banquet, cold-water fish feast, yak hot pot, whole lamb roast.

Signature Experiences

Kanas cruise, Jiache sunset concert, Tajik family visit, heritage craft workshop, Duku Highway crossing, welcome song and dance.

Trip Style

Full Xinjiang arc by luxury train. Long transits handled overnight. Ground days focus on scenery, culture, and regional cuisine.

Where You'll Stay

Heritage Stay

Panda Train Jinxiu Tianfu

7 Nights

A luxury Oriental-themed tourist train with sleeper cabins, dining car, cocktail lounge, and reading room. You sleep on board while the train covers the distance overnight — wake up in a different landscape each morning.

5-Star

5-Star City Hotels

3 Nights

Hilton Urumqi, InterContinental Yining, and Radisson or Hampton by Hilton in Kashgar. International-standard hotels in the three major cities on the route.

Scenic Stay

Alpine Guesthouses

2 Nights

Mountain lodges and scenic guesthouses in Hemu and Kanas — the best available in remote alpine country. Expect warmth and character over polish, with the lake or birch forest right outside.

4-Star Equivalent

4-Star Hotels

2 Nights

Comfortable properties in Tashkurgan (Pamir Plateau gateway) and Turpan (Silk Road basin). Clean, modern, and well-located for the next day's touring.

Best Available

Bayin Town Hotel

1 Night

A highland hotel at the midpoint of the Duku Highway crossing. Remote but vetted — the reward is the mountain scenery outside and a hot meal after a full day on the road.

Itinerary

Day 1 — Boarding & Welcome Ceremony

Your journey begins at the designated train station in Chengdu or Lanzhou, where you board the **Panda Train Jinxiu Tianfu** — a luxury Oriental-themed tourist train that will be your mobile home for the next sixteen days. At the boarding gate, staff welcome you with a travel kit and a brief orientation before you settle into your sleeper cabin.

As the train pulls out of the station, the opening evening unfolds on board: a **welcome ceremony**, a **live band performance**, and a **Xinjiang song and dance show** that sets the tone for everything ahead. Dinner is served in the train's dining car — the first of many on-board meals. The train runs through the night toward Xinjiang.




Day 2 — A Day on the Panda Train

The train crosses the vast Gobi Desert and northwestern mountain country throughout the day. From your window, the landscape shifts from green lowlands to the stark, desolate beauty of the Gobi — silver-grey gravel plains stretching to the horizon, punctuated by wind-sculpted rock formations and distant snow-capped ridges.

On board, the day is shaped by the train's own rhythm: a **reading corner**, a **cocktail gathering**, and themed **sightseeing check-in activities** organized by the crew. Meals are served in the dining car. The train arrives in **Urumqi** in the evening, where you check into a 5-star city hotel for the night.

Guests choosing to join in Urumqi: staff meet you at the airport with a sign reading "Jinxiu Tianfu Train VIP" and transfer you to the same hotel.

Day 3 — Tianshan Tianchi · Welcome Banquet · Train to Altay

 Tianshan Tianchi  Xinjiang Welcome Banquet  +1 more

After breakfast at the hotel, the day opens with the **Xinjiang Welcome Banquet** — a festive meal accompanied by a **traditional Xinjiang song and dance performance** that officially launches the ground touring. This is your introduction to Xinjiang's hospitality: warm, musical, and generous with food.

In the afternoon, the group drives approximately 1.5 hours to **Tianshan Tianchi** (*tee-EN-chee*) — the Heavenly Lake, a turquoise alpine pool at 1,900 metres beneath the snow peak of **Mount Bogda**. The visit lasts about three hours, with time to walk the lakeside boardwalk and take in the scale of the Tianshan range rising behind the water.

After dinner, you transfer to the train station and board the Panda Train bound for Altay in Xinjiang's far north. The train runs overnight.

Day 4 — Into Hemu · Tuvan Village & Birch Forests




 Hemu Village  Hemu River Valley  +1 more

The train arrives in Beitun early in the morning. After breakfast, the group transfers by road toward one of Xinjiang's most remote and beautiful corners — **Hemu Village** (*huh-MOO*), a Tuvan settlement deep in the Altay Mountains. The drive takes approximately five hours, with rest stops and meals arranged along the way.

Hemu




is known as "God's Back Garden" — a village of hand-built log cabins set among birch forests and alpine meadows, where the Tuvan people still live a semi-nomadic life. The **Hemu River Valley** unfolds below the village, with a wooden footbridge crossing the river and flower-covered grasslands at Jiadengyu above. The pace here is deliberately slow: walk the boardwalk, watch the light shift through the birch trees, and let the remoteness settle in. You stay overnight in a **Hemu-style guesthouse** — rustic but warm, with the valley right outside your window.

Day 5 — Kanas Lake Cruise & Guanyu Platform

 Kanas Lake  Guanyu Platform  +1 more



For those willing to rise early, **Hemu at dawn** is worth the effort. The morning mist rolls through the valley in thin veils, threading between log cabins and birch trunks until the village looks like something half-remembered from a dream. Sunrise here is quiet, cold, and extraordinary. After breakfast, the group drives approximately two hours to **Kanas Lake** (*KAH-nahs*) — the centrepiece of Xinjiang's northern alpine country. Often called Asia's only Swiss-style natural scenery, Kanas is a glacier-fed lake whose colour shifts from emerald to sapphire depending on the season and the angle of light. The visit includes a **boat cruise** across the lake surface, bringing you close to the forested slopes that drop steeply into the water. After lunch, the group climbs to the **Guanyu Platform** (*gwahn-YOO*) on Camel Peak — a viewing terrace that looks out over the entire lake and the mountain ridgeline beyond. On a clear day, the panorama is vast enough to feel less like a viewpoint than a different altitude of silence. Dinner and overnight in the Kanas scenic area.

Day 6 — Moon Bay · Fairy Bay · Cold-Water Fish Feast

 Moon Bay  Cold-water fish feast  +2 more

The morning is free to wake naturally and take a last stroll along the lakeside boardwalk at Kanas — no schedule, just the sound of the water and the changing light on the mountains. On the way down from the scenic area, the route passes through three of Kanas's signature viewpoints: **Moon Bay**, where the river bends into a crescent shape beneath the forest canopy; **Fairy Bay**, wrapped in mist and legend; and **Wolong Bay**, where the still water reflects the surrounding slopes like a mirror. Each is a short walk from the road. The group continues to Burqin, a small Altay town, for the day's signature meal — a **cold-water fish feast** (*leng shui yu*) featuring freshwater fish from the glacier-fed rivers of northern Xinjiang. The flavour is clean, delicate, and unlike anything from warmer waters. After dinner, you transfer to Beitun Station and board the Panda Train for the overnight journey south toward Yining.

Day 7 — Sayram Lake · The Last Drop of the Atlantic

 Sayram Lake  +1 more

The train arrives at Jinghe South Station or Yining Station in the morning. A **local welcome ceremony** greets the group before you transfer by road to one of Xinjiang's most striking bodies of water. **Sayram Lake** (*SAI-rahm*) — known as the "last drop of the Atlantic" — is the largest alpine lake in Xinjiang. Fed by moisture carried

across the entire Eurasian continent from the Atlantic Ocean, the lake sits at over 2,000 metres with turquoise water so clear it looks dyed. Snow-capped mountains rise behind the far shore. The visit lasts about two hours, with time to walk the lakeshore and absorb the scale.

After the tour, the group drives to **Yining**, the main city of the Yili Valley. Dinner at a local restaurant, then check-in at a 5-star hotel for the night.

Day 8 — Nalati Grassland · Duku Highway Crossing

 Nalati Grassland  Duku Highway +1 more

Today is one of the most visually dramatic days on the route. After breakfast, the group departs for **Nalati Grassland** (*NAH-lah-tee*) — the "Tianshan Green Island", where layered alpine meadows rise in three dimensions from river valley to ridgeline. The aerial grassland route takes approximately four hours to tour, with time to walk among wildflowers, see Kazakh herder camps, and understand the nomadic culture that still defines life on these slopes.

In the afternoon, you transfer to a private vehicle and begin the **Duku Highway** crossing — the central section between Nalati and Bayinbuluke. This is one of China's most celebrated mountain roads, threading between cliff faces and deep valleys as it climbs through the Tianshan range. The scenery is raw and vast: snow peaks, alpine lakes, and sudden drops into green valley floors.

You arrive in **Bayin Town** in the evening. Dinner and overnight at a highland hotel.

Note: Foreign passport holders cannot access this section of the Duku Highway. An alternative route via train to Kuqa is arranged — they rejoin the group the following day.

Day 9 — Duku Highway South · Tianshan Grand Canyon · Train to Kashgar

 Tianshan Grand Canyon  Bayinbuluke Grassland +2 more

After breakfast, the day continues along the **southern section of the Duku Highway**, descending from the highland plateau toward the Tarim Basin. Through the vehicle window, you pass the **Bayinbuluke Grassland** — a vast marshland known for its swan lake — before climbing over the **Tielimaiti Pass** with its snow-covered peaks, and passing the alpine "dragon ponds" that sit like emeralds in the rock.

The road eventually drops into red-rock country and the **Tianshan Grand Canyon** (*tee-EN-shahn*) — one of China's top ten canyons, where towering red sandstone cliffs have been carved by wind and water into a geological wonderland hidden in the southern foothills of the Tianshan. The visit takes about an hour.

After dinner, you transfer to the train station and board the Panda Train for the overnight journey to **Kashgar** — the ancient Silk Road city at Xinjiang's western edge.

Day 10 — China-Pakistan Highway · Baisha Lake · Tajik Family Visit

 Baisha Lake  Yak meat hot pot  Tajik family visit +2 more

The train arrives in Kashgar in the morning, and the day turns toward the Pamir Plateau — one of the most remote and awe-inspiring landscapes on the entire route.

The group drives approximately three hours along the **China-Pakistan Friendship Highway** (*zhong-ba gong lu*), climbing steadily toward the roof of the world. The first stop is **Baisha Lake** (*bai sha hu*) — where undulating silver-white sand dunes meet a lake of startling blue, a contrast so sharp it looks painted. The stop lasts about forty minutes.

Continue to **Tashkurgan** (*TAHSH-koor-gahn*),

the legendary border town on the Pamir Plateau. Sitting at approximately 3,800 metres, Tashkurgan's position — one county bordering three countries (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan) — gives it a frontier gravity unlike anywhere else in China. This is also the hometown of Laziqin Bayika, the 2021 "Touching China" Person of the Year, and the filming location of the classic film *Visitors on the Glacier*.

The afternoon brings a **Tajik family visit**, where you sit in a traditional home, taste handmade Tajik snacks, and learn about the culture of China's Tajik community — a people whose faces and customs feel more Central Asian than Chinese.

Dinner is **yak meat hot pot** — hearty, rich, and suited to the altitude. Overnight at a hotel in Tashkurgan.

Day 11 — Karakul Lake · Heritage Craft Workshop · Whole Lamb Feast




 Karakul Lake  Roasted whole lamb feast  Heritage craft workshop  +1 more

After breakfast, the group drives approximately two hours to **Karakul Lake** (*KAH-rah-kool*) — the crown jewel of the Pamir Plateau. Known as the "mirror of the father of icebergs", the lake sits directly beneath **Muztagh Ata**, a 7,546-metre peak whose reflection fills the water surface on calm mornings. The hour-long visit is less about "seeing a lake" and more about standing in one of the most purely beautiful places on the planet — the scale, the silence, and the proximity of the ice-covered massif above you.

On the return to Kashgar, the group stops for an **intangible cultural heritage craft workshop** — a hands-on session in a traditional craft that has been passed down through generations of Xinjiang's ethnic communities. The workshop is about touch and patience: feeling the rhythm of a skill that has survived centuries of change.

The day closes in Kashgar with a **roasted whole lamb feast** (*kaoquanyang*) — the signature celebration meal of Xinjiang, where an entire lamb is slow-roasted until the skin is crisp and the meat falls from the bone. Overnight at a hotel in Kashgar.

Day 12 — Kashgar Old City · Gaotai · Id Kah Mosque

 Kashgar Old City  Id Kah Mosque  Gaotai Old Town  +1 more

Today belongs to **Kashgar** — the city that sat at the western end of the Silk Road for over 2,000 years and still feels, in its oldest quarters, like the place where China ends and Central Asia begins.

The morning opens at the **Kashgar Old City** (*KAH-shuh-gahr*), a labyrinth of mud-brick lanes, wooden balconies, and family courtyards that has been continuously inhabited for millennia. Your guide walks you through the narrow streets, pointing out the architectural logic — load-bearing walls of sun-dried brick, upper floors that lean over the lane for shade, and doorway carvings that indicate the family's history. The visit lasts about 1.5 hours.

Continue to **Gaotai Old Town** (*gow-TAI*) — a hillside neighbourhood of brightly painted houses built directly into the cliff face, and the filming location for the award-winning film *The Kite Runner*. The architecture here is raw, layered, and photogenic — every angle reveals another combination of colour, texture, and lived-in character.

The afternoon brings **Id Kah Mosque** (*ee-dah KAH*) — the largest mosque in Xinjiang and one of the most important in China. The architecture combines Arabic and Uyghur styles, with a yellow-tiled facade and a prayer hall that can accommodate thousands. The visit lasts about forty minutes.

After dinner, you board the Panda Train for the overnight journey to **Turpan** — the gateway to Xinjiang's Silk Road desert country.

Day 13 — Arrival in Turpan · Jiaohe Ancient City Concert

Jiaohe Ancient City Concert

The train arrives in Turpan, where you check into a hotel and take a short rest. The temperature here is a shock after the Pamir — Turpan sits in China's hottest basin, a place where summer ground temperatures rival the Sahara.

The signature experience comes in the evening. As the sun drops and the desert heat finally relents, the group transfers to **Jiaohe Ancient City** (*jee-OW-huh*) — a 2,000-year-old fortress carved from a natural cliff island between two rivers. Once a garrison town on the Silk Road, Jiaohe's earthen ramparts and street grid have survived intact in the bone-dry climate.

Here, as sunset cloaks the thousand-year-old walls in gold, you attend the **Jiaohe Ancient City Concert** — a live performance staged inside the ruins. The music rises from the same ground where Silk Road soldiers once stood watch, and the wind carries the sound across the ancient streets. This is not a stadium show — it is a conversation between history and the present, set against one of the most atmospheric backdrops in all of China.

Note: If the concert cannot be held due to weather (strong winds), an equivalent cultural performance by a local ethnic art group is arranged as a substitute.

Day 14 — Flaming Mountains · Karez · Fruit Feast

Flaming Mountains

Karez

Turpan fruit feast

After breakfast at the hotel, the morning begins at the **Flaming Mountains** (*huo yan shan*) — the red sandstone ridgeline that inspired the fire mountain chapter in *Journey to the West*. The mountains do not literally burn, but in summer the rock radiates heat that you can feel from the ground up. At the base stands China's largest thermometer — a novelty, but the ground temperature readings (sometimes above 70°C) are genuinely startling.

At midday, the group is treated to a **Turpan fruit feast** — grapes, melons, figs, and dried fruits from the oasis farmlands around the city. Xinjiang is called the land of fruits, and Turpan's extreme heat and irrigation produce some of the sweetest fruit in the country.

The afternoon brings the last major site: **Karez** (*KAH-rehz*) — Xinjiang's ancient underground irrigation system, an engineering achievement ranked alongside the Great Wall and the Grand Canal. The tunnels carry snowmelt from the Tianshan to the desert oasis fields below, entirely by gravity, through channels that can stretch for kilometres underground. The visit lasts about thirty minutes and includes a walk through a section of the tunnel.

You then transfer to Turpan Railway Station and board the Panda Train for the return journey.

Day 15 — Return Journey by Train

The train runs through the day and night on the return journey to Chengdu or Lanzhou. On board, the rhythm of the train takes over one last time: meals in the dining car, the reading corner, and the Gobi landscape rolling past the window as the journey winds down.

This is a day for reflection — processing the scale of what you have seen, sorting through your photos, and letting the pace slow before re-entry. The crew organizes farewell activities as the route crosses back through the northwestern corridor.

Day 16 — Arrival & Farewell

The Panda Train arrives at its destination station in Chengdu or Lanzhou. After a final breakfast on board, you disembark and conclude a journey that has covered the full breadth of Xinjiang — from alpine lakes and nomad villages to Silk Road fortresses and the edge of Central Asia.

Guests arrange their own onward transport from the station. For those with late flights, the city offers a last morning of exploration before departure.

Note: Lunch and dinner are not included on Day 16.

Before Booking

✓ What's Included

Transport — Luxury Panda Train Jinxiu Tianfu for all seven overnight rail segments between destinations. Standard air-conditioned tourist coaches for ground touring at each stop. All scenic transport (shuttles, boats, cable cars) at scheduled sites included.

Guide — Professional local guides at each destination, plus full-time accompanying service staff for the entire journey. Certified medical professional on board the train for the duration of the trip.

Accommodation — 15 nights total. 7 nights on board the Panda Train in private sleeper cabins. 8 hotel nights: 5-star hotels in Urumqi, Yining, and Kashgar; high-end alpine guesthouses in Hemu and Kanas; 4-star hotels in Tashkurgan and Turpan; best available in Bayin Town.

Meals — 15 breakfasts and 30 main meals. On-board train dining featuring curated multi-course meals, plus destination dining including Xinjiang Welcome Banquet, Burqin cold-water fish feast, Tashkurgan yak meat hot pot, Kashgar roasted whole lamb feast, and Turpan fruit feast.

Entrance Fees — All scheduled scenic sites: Tianshan Tianchi, Hemu Village, Kanas Lake (boat cruise included), Sayram Lake, Nalati Grassland, Tianshan Grand Canyon, Karakul Lake, Kashgar Old City, Gaotai Old Town, Id Kah Mosque, Jiaohe Ancient City, Flaming Mountains, and Karez.

Experiences — Xinjiang Welcome Banquet with traditional song and dance performance, Kanas Lake cruise, Tajik family visit with traditional handmade snacks, intangible cultural heritage craft workshop, Jiaohe Ancient City Concert at sunset, and themed on-board activities throughout the journey.

Insurance — Complimentary travel accident insurance with maximum coverage of 300,000 RMB per person.

Extras — Travel kit provided at boarding. On-board themed activities and entertainment organized by the train crew.


+ Booking Options


Availability Notice — This is a chartered train departure with limited cabin and hotel allocations. Availability may vary by departure date. If cabins are unavailable at the time of booking, your reservation may be cancelled.

Cabin Upgrade — Jǐntà Luxury Twin — Upgrade to the Luxury Twin cabin on the Panda Train for 98,880 CNY per person (standard Jǐnwò Quality Twin cabin is 78,880 CNY). The Luxury cabin is 13 m² with a Song-dynasty-style tea table, twin sofa, mini fridge, private bathroom, and wardrobe. Only 6 cabins available per departure — book early.


Single Room Supplement — A supplement of 8,000 RMB per person applies for guests who prefer private hotel rooms at destination stops.


Prepare for Travel


 Please book your own flights to Chengdu or Lanzhou (boarding city) and return flights from the same city. Guests joining in Urumqi on Day 2 should fly to Urumqi Diwopu International Airport.


 Travel accident insurance is included (300,000 RMB per person). We recommend supplemental medical and evacuation coverage for international travel.


 Please arrange your own mobile data plan before departure. Coverage varies across remote parts of Xinjiang.


 Check China visa requirements before booking. Foreign nationals cannot visit the central and southern sections of the Duku Highway — an alternative route via train is arranged for those days.

 Bring any personal prescriptions needed. Carry basic remedies for stomach discomfort and altitude adaptation — some areas are above 3,000m.

 Please inform us of any dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions when booking. Xinjiang cuisine features lamb, beef, and wheat-based dishes. Halal dietary traditions are widespread.

 Most scheduled venues accept international credit cards. For local bazaars and small shops, please have cash ready. Prices in Xinjiang are often quoted per kilogram.

 Mostly vehicle-based touring with moderate walking at scenic sites. No strenuous hiking. Some days involve long drives (4–5 hours). Altitude reaches approximately 3,800m at Tashkurgan.

 Xinjiang has extreme temperature swings — up to 20°C between day and night. Bring layers, strong sun protection (high UV at altitude), and comfortable walking shoes. Anti-motion-sickness medication recommended for mountain roads.

? FAQ

Where does the tour start and end?

Starts and ends in Chengdu or Lanzhou. Airport transfers are not included. Meet at the designated train station in Chengdu or Lanzhou at the scheduled departure time. The tour ends at Chengdu or Lanzhou station.

What is the cancellation policy?

This is a chartered train service. After paying the deposit, cancellation forfeits the deposit. 15–29 days before departure: 50% fee. 1–14 days: 85%. Day of departure: 100%. Substitution is allowed up to 3 days before. Full details at [Terms & Conditions](#).

Can I fly a drone during the tour?

China requires all drone operators to register with the CAAC. Many scenic and border areas in Xinjiang are restricted. Inform your guide in advance.

Can foreign passport holders join?

Yes. Foreign nationals cannot visit the Duku Highway mid/south sections (Days 8–9) — they take a train to Kuqa and rejoin the group. All other destinations are accessible.

How physically demanding is this tour?

Mostly vehicle-based with moderate walking. No strenuous hiking. Highest point is Tashkurgan at ~3,800m.

What is the Panda Train like?

A luxury tourist train with sleeper cabins, dining car, cocktail lounge, reading room, and themed activities. All on-board meals included.

Is there a single-room supplement?

Yes — 8,000 RMB per person for hotel nights. Train cabins follow the standard sleeper configuration.

What kind of food should I expect?

Xinjiang cuisine: lamb, beef, flatbread, hand-pulled noodles, fresh fruit. Signature meals include Welcome Banquet, cold-water fish, yak hot pot, whole lamb roast, and Turpan fruit feast. All meals included.

How is the weather?

Extreme temperature variation (up to 20°C day/night). Northern Xinjiang is cooler; southern Xinjiang can be very hot. Strong UV at altitude. Bring layers and sun protection.

Should I book pre/post-tour accommodation?

If arriving the night before, arrange your own hotel in the boarding city. The train departs at a set time on Day 1.

Local Names

Kanas KAH-nahs

Kanas Lake — Asia's only Swiss-style alpine scenery, where the water changes color with the season

Hemu huh-MOO

A log-cabin village where Tuvan herders still live among birch forests and morning mist

Kashgar KAHS-gahr

The western gateway of the Silk Road — 2,000 years of trade compressed into one living Old City

Turpan TOOR-pahn

China's hottest city — where the Flaming Mountains glow red and ancient irrigation tunnels still flow underground

Tianchi tee-EN-chee

Tianshan Tianchi — a turquoise alpine lake at 1,900m beneath the snow peak of Mount Bogda

Sayram SAI-rahm

Sayram Lake — the largest alpine lake in Xinjiang, called the last drop of the Atlantic in China

Nalati NAH-lah-tee

The aerial grassland — a layered alpine meadow at the foot of the Tianshan range

Duku DOO-koo

Duku Highway — one of the most beautiful roads in China, crossing the Tianshan between cliff faces and alpine lakes

Karakul KAH-rah-kool

Karakul Lake — the mirror of the father of icebergs, sitting beneath Muztagh Ata peak on the Pamir Plateau

Tashkurgan TAHSH-koor-gahn

A Tajik town on the Pamir Plateau where one county borders three countries

Jiaohe jee-OW-huh

Jiaohe Ancient City — a 2,000-year-old Silk Road fortress carved from a natural river-island cliff

Karez KAH-rehz

An ancient underground canal system — one of China's three great engineering feats alongside the Great Wall and Grand Canal